

Italian Artist Riccardo Matlakas Unveils Monumental Mosaic At Gozo College



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A striking new mosaic, titled Two Waves, by Italian artist Riccardo Matlakas has been unveiled at the New Building of Gozo College Secondary School, blending bold artistic expression with urgent ecological themes. The seven-square-meter

The project brings together art and science to promote marine conservation and sustainable practices across the Mediterranean.

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Matlakas, known for his global interventions addressing conflict and environmental crises, infused Gozo’s artisanal traditions into the mosaic. While the artwork integrates reclaimed materials, including discarded tiles sourced from island workshops, it also incorporates new elements that symbolise the intersection of heritage and modernity. “Using recycled fragments honours Gozo’s craft legacy while reflecting our fractured relationship with nature,” said Matlakas. “It’s a reminder that sustainability is not a fixed state but a collective responsibility.”

Inspired by Taoist philosophy, Two Waves juxtaposes the resilience of the ocean against humanity’s industrial footprint.

The majority of the mosaic bursts with marine life; schools of fish, undulating seaweed, and vibrant coral rendered in blues and greens. Yet subtle details hint at ecological fragility: a plastic bottle drifting among waves, frayed fishing nets lurking beneath the surface. In stark contrast, the opposing quarter presents industrial imagery—smokestacks releasing plumes of gray smoke, their rigid geometry encroaching on organic forms.

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A solitary bee and bird, delicately placed within the bleakness, serve as silent witnesses to biodiversity’s precarious state. A golden transitional band weaves the two halves together, suggesting the potential for harmony through mindful choices.

Matlakas’ artistic journey has spanned continents and crises; from wrapping a decommissioned Ukrainian tank in pajamas as a plea for peace to installations along Korea’s Demilitarized Zone. Two Waves continues this ethos, transforming a school wall into a platform for environmental dialogue.

“This isn’t just decoration—it’s a provocation,” said an Art4Sea coordinator. *“Students will interact with these themes daily, sparking conversations about responsibility and renewal.”*

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Local artisans collaborated with Matlakas to source materials and refine techniques, ensuring the project resonates with Gozo’s cultural identity. The mosaic’s creation was documented by photographers, whose work will be showcased in an educational film debuting later this year in Ustica.

Gozo College also plans to launch workshops exploring the mosaic’s themes—linking art to lessons on marine biology, recycling, and climate action.

In June 2025, Matlakas will return to Gozo for a live art event alongside artists Giacomo Rizzo, Riccardo Buonafede, and Theic Licuado. Other internationally renowned artists will present newworks throughout the island, leading up to the initiative’s grand culmination in September on Italy’s Ustica Island.

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There, artists from Mediterranean communities will showcase works reflecting shared environmental challenges, fostering a regional network of creatives dedicated to cultural and ecological preservation.

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