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Art4Sea artists launch artworks in Gozo

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Art4Sea Italian artists, with the newly-launched Two Waves mosaic in the background, at Agius De Soldanis Middle School in

Italian artist Riccardo Matlakas has unveiled his latest artwork on the external walls of the newly-built Gozo College Agius De Soldanis Middle School in Victoria.

Funded by the European Union and supported by the Goethe Institute, Two Waves, a striking seven-square-metre mosaic, reflects a deep commitment to cultural exchange and environmental awareness.

The project was part of Art4Sea, an interdisciplinary platform that merges art, science and technology to promote ocean literacy and marine conservation. By engaging artists, scientists and digital experts, Art4Sea fosters a broader understanding of marine ecosystems while inspiring communities to adopt sustainable practices.

Matlakas, known for his socially-engaged art, chose to work with mosaic rather than a painted mural for this project, to honour Gozo's heritage in mosaic craftsmanship, while also using recycled materials such as discarded tiles, reinforcing his dedication to environmental consciousness.

Two Waves is inspired by the Taoist Taijitu, symbolising the relationship between the resilience of the ocean and the impact of human industrial activity. Three-quarters of the composition is dedicated to the ocean, celebrating its vastness and strength through fluid forms, vibrant contrasts and intricate portrayals of marine life.

This section also incorporates subtle reminders of human impact, such as plastics and discarded fishing nets, highlighting the ongoing environmental challenges.

The remaining quarter depicts industrial activity, represented by factory chimneys releasing smoke – a powerful commentary on pollution and its effects on the natural world. Within this section, Matlakas includes symbolic elements: a single bee and a lone bird, representing hope, but also the fragility of biodiversity in the face of environmental destruction. A transitional space connects the two opposing forces, emphasising the potential for harmony and renewal through conscious choices.

Throughout his career, Matlakas has explored global issues through art, with projects spanning Ukraine, where his Pyjamas Party covered a World War II tank in pyjama fabric as a metaphorical invitation for war to sleep, as well as works between

Nd South and North Korea and Palestine that have engaged with themes of identity, conflict and humanitarian dialogue

On the same day of the launch of Two Waves, Art4Sea artists inaugurated Symbiosis and Calypso on the walls of the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) in Qala. The two large-scale murals are by Riccardo Buonafede and Theic.

In the afternoon, other artists submerged an underwater sculpture, Trajectories, by Giacomo Rizzo in the bay of Xwejni at a depth of 10 metres. Trajectories is a symbolic vessel carved from local limestone, from which rise organic forms in eco-compatible cement.

An Art4Sea digital exhibition, using VR headsets, is currently on display at ITS. The exhibition features 12 digital artworks.

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