



Press Release

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Speech by President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, on the occasion of the 'Din l-Art Helwa' Awards for Architectural Heritage 2016

Let me begin by once again congratulating all of today's winners for their excellent projects. You make us all very proud.

Indeed, Din l-Art Helwa's decades of activity are a source of national pride. The National Trust of Malta is a shining example of the quality of work that we need, to continue promoting and protecting the precious heritage of our islands.

Our heritage is what gives us a tangible connection to our social values, our beliefs, our traditions, and our customs. It gives us a sense of identity. It creates solidarity around the shared inheritance of our natural environment, our architecture, and our culture. It allows us to identify with one another, while also celebrating the diversity which enriches our society.

Through our heritage, we are in constant and meaningful contact with the memory of previous generations. We are rooted in our history, ensuring that the experiences they endured will live on, and inspire us to make a positive difference in today's world.

The deeper our roots reach down into our history, the stronger they are. The stronger we are, the more prepared we shall be to face tomorrow's challenges with resilience, with dignity, and in a spirit of peace.

Preservation and restoration play an important cultural role. They teach us something important about ourselves, and promote a sense of connection with those who lived in a different time, in a different society, and had different values to our own.

Therefore, the role of our environmental and cultural heritage is of essential value. I believe that a price cannot be placed on the vitality of our heritage. When I meet children and young people, the topic of environmental sustainability, in particular, is always mentioned.

For this reason, the need for a respectful relationship with our natural heritage must be kept high on our national agenda. This focus has also been emphasised by research conducted by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, in its consultations with thousands of people across the country.

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We must continue listening to, and acting upon, the concerns of our communities. The role of Din l-Art Helwa is more necessary now than ever before, responding to these concerns, promoting the health of our natural environment, and protecting our nation's rich architectural heritage.

I believe that we must encourage our children to find and incorporate the power of their heritage into their daily lives, by first of all understanding the importance of culture. Only then can we all begin to truly value it. From there, we can find innovative ways for young people to care for their heritage, and to enjoy it.

When we enjoy the beauty and the great potential of our heritage, we shall inevitably desire to learn and to understand it more deeply. And so the circle continues, growing stronger with each passing generation.

I believe that we cannot go on accepting prevailing trends, which make it seem like it is somehow simpler and cheaper to pursue continuous development. Instead, we must make every effort to preserve and to revitalise our existing heritage. This is real progress.

A truly progressive approach is one which respects the wellbeing of every person, which builds peace among our communities, and which sees the limitless benefits of keeping our heritage intact. It is an approach which breathes new life into our history, our present, and our future.

Visitors from all over the world come to our islands, to enjoy the unique beauty of our history and our architectural and cultural legacy. Moreover, the conscious choice to promote a conservation approach sends a strong message about our commitment to peaceful strategies for the environmental care of our islands.

One such initiative, currently underway at San Anton Palace and facilitated by Perit Amber Wismayer, is exploring how technological innovations, environmental sensitivity, and traditional techniques can prioritise occupant wellbeing. We must continue to promote such multidisciplinary and ecologically respectful approaches, actively promoting the preservation of our heritage.

In closing, let me share a piece of wisdom passed down to us from the Ancient Greeks. It teaches us that our societies grow great when old men plant trees, whose shade they know they shall never sit in.

This is the work of Din l-Art Helwa. This is the proof of your passion, and the dedication of your collaborators. We must all, in our own ways, plant the seeds of a sustainable future which shall be of benefit to our country and above all, to our children.

We must all work towards a meaningful legacy, of peace and wellbeing, which shall be a source of pride for generations to come.

Thank you.