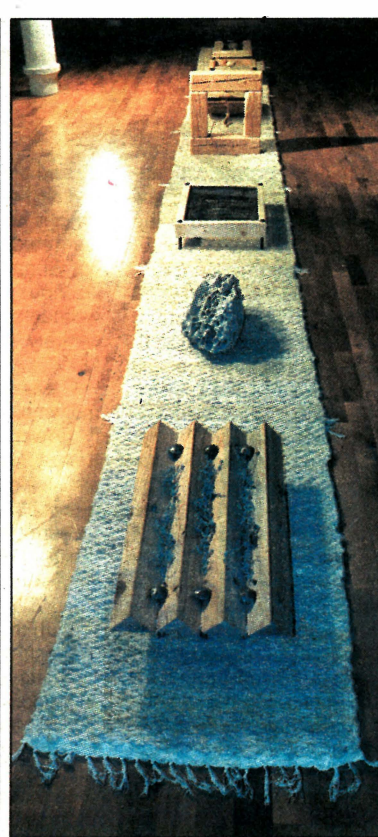


# Artist's latest successes abroad



**CAMPS OF DISPLACEMENT**, shown at the Florence Biennale



**SEVEN SACRED SPACES**, shown at the Matthew Galler at the Edinburgh Festival

*Seven Sacred Journeys* speaks of the sanctuaries and temples in Gozo, known for centuries for the old cult of the goddess. Gozo still enjoys a reputation as a place of refuge, the place where it is possible to escape from time. *Seven Sacred Journeys* opens new possibilities, incorporating the use of wood and the innate beauty of its grains and natural colour, the rope, the use of wire, metal rods and studs, mirrors.

One of the figurines represents a small boat that has been carefully placed on the eroded stone. It sails on the high seas suggested by the holes formed by the forces of nature. The work becomes an invitation to walk alongside its flanks and experience this journey of change through time.

A second important project in which Attard took part was the *Diaspora Project* held between November 4 and 30 in Oviedo, Spain. The purpose of this international art meeting was to reflect on the theme of the phenomenology of migrations, exiles, the movement and fusion of peoples and their cultures in the process of displacement. All the works produced by the 40 Spanish and international artists consisted mainly of theatrical and musical performances, conferences and open-air sculptures.

Attard's work consisted of an interactive sculpture made simply out of a brick wall through which penetrates a see-saw. The wall is symbolically significant in representing division, a demarcation, separating borders. The people standing behind each side of the wall are physically divided and unable to communicate. On a larger scale this

becomes even more significant with one nation separated from another.

The small opening of a hole in the wall through which passes a see-saw is the only window which allows some communication to either side. The see-saw, therefore, stands for co-operation, sharing and working together. Of its very nature this device requires one to balance the other, co-operate with its counter-part. One cannot ride a see-saw alone.

The idea is therefore to see beyond the brick wall that blocks our vision. There is an element of tolerance involved that is necessary in allowing others who have to live in another culture. The wall is designed in such a way that it has steps on each side. It changes from a barrier into a flight of steps that open new means of communication.

The wall becomes a passage through which people can climb, meet and shake hands. Attard entitled his work *Tolerance of Ambiguity* in which he made all the spectators reflect on the principle of opposition and interaction as the wall and the sea-saw became means of overcoming difficulties. People were invited to ride the see-saw and climb the wall of steps to experience the barrier and the passage.

The underlying philosophy of this interactive sculpture is that the spectator does not adopt a passive role while looking at it, but rather becomes more of an actor and gets involved in the same way we inhabit the world. Young art students volunteered in the production of the work, this in itself uniting people in the sharing and exchanges



**TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY**, exhibited in Oviedo, Spain

of different experiences. The idea behind this project is not simply to occupy a designated site, but to actually constitute the place.

A third project has been Attard's participation in the second Biennale of Florence, inaugurated in the first week of this month. Attard had various ideas of possible works that he could submit, and continued to develop his ideas to the last minute.

In the end he decided on the idea of displacement and movement and turned his attention to the problems faced by refugees who leave their country and start living a nomadic life in temporary shelters. *Camps of Displacement* focuses on the idea of three tents, suggested in a synthetic manner; each one made up of a pair of inverted V-shaped wooden strips. A plastic sheet laid on the ground suggests the temporary nature of the structure.

Each symbolic tent serves as a stand for a metal rod on which hangs a cooking implement. A large spoon with a shallow bowl contains beans that are also wrapped in tape to preserve the contents. A slight opening that allows the viewers to gain an understanding of the contents is suggestive of a mouth and refers to the problems associated with the eating and feeding of large numbers of displaced peoples. The middle tent holds a fork pitching a tiny figure made of cloth and string between two prongs. The figure suggests a soft toy and refers to the many innocent children caught up in this situation of suffering.

The third cooking implement contains glass eyes that refer to the lives of so many humans escaping from one danger to another waiting patiently to be processed by bureaucratic governments. Each cooking implement, which we associate with food, transforms its contents into food for thought for the mind and heart to each and every one. The discourse and experience of the spectator is very relevant; it is not just his vision that is required but his presence as well.

The disappearance of the pedestal, even though purely emblematic in the wooden sticks, accentuates the nomadic character of the work. The sculpture in its totality is presented with a rare simplicity and elegance that transforms the objects into a work of art.

The participation by Norbert Francis Attard in these international events augurs well for the year 2000.

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NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD'S forthcoming event is a video installation, called *Rites of Passage*. This is being back projected onto the main door of the Auberge de Castille in Valletta with music by Reuben Zahra.

The video is a celebration of life's constant changes. The superimposed images of water and sea waves symbolise the state of flux and eternal motion in life. A storm takes us into historic space, a journey that covers thousands of years, from Malta's neolithic temples to the tempest that brought the apostle St Paul to the island, from the artistic heritage found in the Baroque churches up to contemporary life and expression.

The flow of this passage explores the shape and sense of continuum in time, its rhythm, duration and its irreversibility. Every image hints that each moment is never identical to the other instants, as the wheels of the time clock interact in a flow of liquid meditations.

The journey that started with a storm ends up with the Big Bang explosion, linking the past to the present. It all points to the present actuality as past and future are placed in the objective present. The main door of Castille becomes a presence linking the past, present and future histories. The passage of time goes on unhindered till the end of time.

This work forms part of the official inauguration of St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity and will be performed on Friday, New Year's Eve, at 10 p.m. The public is welcome to experience this video installation after which the centre will be open to visitors.

**Joseph Paul Cassar**