





From the Dean

Dear all,

301 Board

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Welcome to the first edition of the MAKS newsletter. I would have much preferred welcoming you in happier times when we could all meet on campus as usual without the currently-obligatory face masks. But life must go on and dark times require even brighter lights. And I am very pleased to note that during the pandemic all members of the faculty, both students and staff, have striven not only to "carry on as usual" but gone further and made the most of the changed circumstances to

explore and exploit new teaching, learning, and research methods. Well done all!

The intention is for there to be regular editions of the MAKS digital newsletter that will include information of interest to members of the Faculty such as academic activities of members of the Faculty, current research programmes, funding awarded, and new initiatives.

Keep well and stay safe.

Noellie Professor Noellie Brockdorff

Welcoming new members of staff



Dr Valeria Vanesio is a Lecturer in the Department of Library Information and Archive Sciences, University of Malta. Her main field of research is the archival history of the Order of Saint John, with a particular focus on the early modern period. She holds a Ph.D in Archival and Library Science from Sapienza University of Rome and two diplomas from the State Archive in Rome and the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano. She was post-doc and Archivist of the Malta Study Center (HMML, USA) from 2018 to 2020. Valeria was also in charge of a 3-year project concerning the reorganisation of the historical fonds at Magistral Archives of Order of Saint John in Rome (2014-2017).

Her doctoral dissertation reconstructed the archival practices used by the central government of the Order and the Italian Priories through unpublished sources of Magistral Archives to study the admission archival process (Langue of Italy) and the archival dispersion after 1798.

Dr Ioannis Revolidis, LL.M. was born in Drama, Greece. He studied Law at the Law faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. He graduated summa cum laude in 2008. In 2011 he obtained his Masters in Civil, Procedural and Labour Law with an LL.M. thesis on illegally obtained digital evidence in civil procedure. He is a lecturer in the Department of Information Policy & Governance.

Between 2013 and 2019 he was a senior research associate at the Institute for Legal Informatics, Law Faculty, Leibniz Universität, Hannover, where he conducted research in European IT Law (data protection, e-commerce, intellectual property and private international law). During his time in Hannover he participated as an active researcher in EU funded research projects (mostly related to data protection legal issues within medical research), coordinated the INSITU summer-school in EU IT and IP Law as well as the EULISP Masters in EU IT and IP Law, published scholarly papers in the aforementioned fields of law, undertook the teaching of relevant classes (EU e-commerce Law, EU Data Protection Law, EU Intellectual Property Law and EU Private International Law) and participated in relevant conferences.



In 2019 he obtained his doctorate with a Ph.D Thesis on International Jurisdiction and the Internet. For his Ph.D research he was supported by the Onassis Foundation. His Ph.D thesis received unanimously the grade "summa cum laude" from the examining committee.



MAKS RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES 2020-2021

Wednesday, 27th January 2021

Digital Property Rights after the TomKabinet Decision of the CJEU: the Road to Digital Serfdom?

Speaker: Dr Ioannis Revolidis

Hosted by: Department of Information Policy and

Governance

Already delivered successfully to a large audience.





Wednesday, 24th February 2021

Immersive Reality Technologies

Speakers: Fabrizio Cali and Tram Nguyen

Hosted by: Department of Digital Arts, through MAKS Immersion Lab

Via Zoom @ 12:15

Wednesday, 24th March 2021

Blockchain, Self-Sovereign Identity and Digital Credentials: Promise versus Praxis for Higher Education

Speaker: Dr Alex Grech

Hosted by: Department of Media and Communications

Via Zoom @ 12:15



Wednesday, 21st April 2021

Addressing the challenge of data collection and analysis in the Digital Era

Speaker: Prof Irena Chiru

Hosted by: Department of Information Policy & Governance

Via Zoom @ 12:15



Wednesday, 28th April 2021

Digital Preservation, Accessibility, and Education: Cataloging endangered records on Malta and the Order of Saint John

Speaker: Dr Valeria Vanesio

Hosted by: Department of Library Information and Archive Sciences

Via Zoom @ 12:15





Wednesday, 26th May 2021

Ensemble Perception of Human Crowds

Speaker: Tram Nguyen

Hosted by: Department of Cognitive Science

Via Zoom @ 12:15

Wednesday, 30th June 2021

The use of artificial intelligence for the digital marketing of financial services to vulnerable customers

Speaker: Dr Emmanuel Mogaji, University of Greenwich Hosted by: Department of Corporate Communication

Via Zoom @ 12:15







The aim of the MKSA is to build a community among all students registered with the organisation. It also provides a channel through which MAKS students can voice their concerns, express their

opinions and showcase their talents.

From the MKSA manifesto by the President of MKSA, Davinia Agius

I'm a second-year student, reading for an undergraduate degree In Communications and previously served MKSA as Social Policy Officer. In my free time, I love shopping and watching classic movies. I also like to go out with friends and meet new people, while having discussions about current affairs.

I'm passionate about student activism and through my role at MKSA, I would like to help students achieve their potential. I firmly believe in teamwork, as working together to achieve one goal will make anything possible.

As a team, I believe in striving to enrich students' University life. I believe that being an active student is of the utmost importance during this period of our lives.

Besides improving our communication skills both during and beyond the organisation, being an activist helps us to discover our hidden passions. It's a chance in exercising our strength to have our voices heard.

Above all, the memories that you create within your team last a lifetime. These past two years in MKSA have shown me the true value of working alongside team members that strive to better themselves day after day.

By inspiring each other we can achieve goals and make anything possible.

"There are no limitations to what one can do. Aim high. Persevere. Achieve".

president.mksa@gmail.com

Very successful MKSA *Give Hope this Christmas* campaign

MKSA organised a fund-raising event called 'Give Hope This Christmas'. The proceeds from this event were donated to 'Smiling with Jerome', a charity organization whose mission is to "provide support, assistance and compassion to individuals who are passing through difficult times, with particular emphasis on those who have been diagnosed with cancer or other serious ailments".

In order to promote this event, MKSA collaborated with SongSmith and Fix-it Imports and launched a music video with the song 'Do they Know it's Christmas' featuring local artists: Dave Jr, Karin Duff, Matt Black, Gianluca Bezzina, Kurt Calleja, Debbie Scerri, Mike Spiteri, Gianni Zammit, Ivan Grech, Kersten Graham & Kyle Zarb. MKSA also asked other UM student organisations, politicians and well-known Maltese people to send a clip of them giving Hope and sharing it with others.

All proceeds went towards 'Smiling with Jerome' for the purchase of Chemo Bags of Hope that provide cancer patients going through chemotherapy with a bag filled with items that can help provide some comfort during such a long treatment process. Each bag costs around €60.

Throughout this campaign, MKSA managed to raise a staggering €1,465. MKSA would like to thank all those who were involved. They have truly helped the organisation "Give Hope".





During the giveaway ceremony



A Creative Collaboration between the Department of Digital Arts and Palazzo Falson

One of the salient tenets that underpins the Department of Digital Arts is 'collaboration'. The Department constantly on the lookout to establish appropriate and meaningful creative collaborations with entities outside the University of Malta. In recent years the Department has embarked on a diverse range of collaborative projects in conjunction with Festivals Malta, MUZA, Merlin Publishers, ARTZ ID, Teatru Malta and more recently with Palazzo Falson. These collaborations took place through one of the study-units offered during the third year of the BFA (Hons) in Digital Arts course delivered by Professor Vince Briffa and Dr Trevor Borg, namely 'Professional Practice – Internship'.

The Professional Practice study-unit gives students the opportunity to work with industry practitioners on real life projects. This experience provides the student with a taster of the real working environment of the digital artist within the local business scenario. It also gives the student the opportunity to create real workflows and participate in creative production.

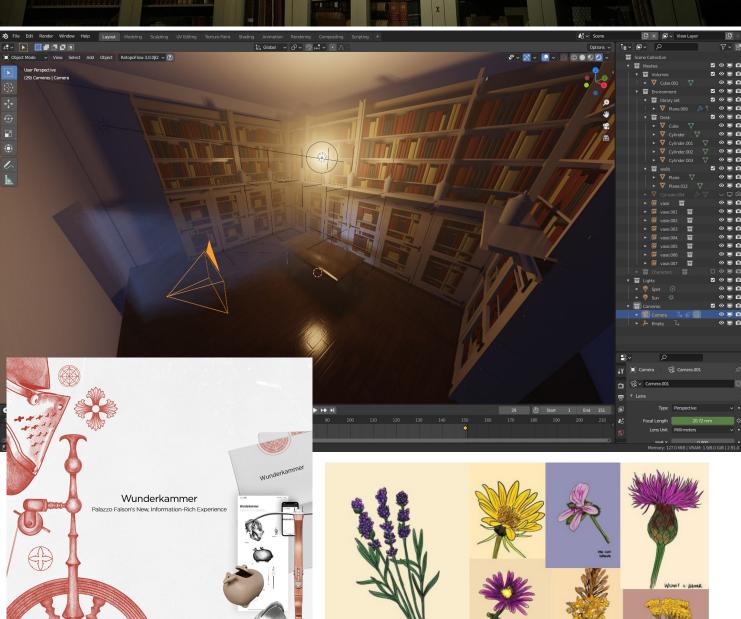
The entire third year cohort has been involved in the Palazzo Falson Project and together with the museum's curator it was decided to divide the group into six teams, each of which was tasked with a very specific project.

The six tasks constituted an interactive map of the museum, animated children's informative tasks, the pollinator project, a digital narrative illustrating the lives of the Gollcher couple, signage and wayfinding - inside/outside the museum and an audio visual photo archive. The students pitched their work as part of an online presentation session whereby their course lecturers, curators and researchers from the museum gave them feedback pertaining to the respective outcome of each team.

The work of the students has been reviewed highly by the museum team and some of the projects will be implemented as part of Palazzo Falson's digitisation strategy.







LAVENDER



Feature

Students sounded out on online lecturing

The pandemic meant that, suddenly, almost all lecturing was shifted to online platforms: Zoom for synchronous lecturing, with the VLE, Panopto, etc, used for asynchronous instruction. We sounded out a few of our undergraduate students for reactions about online lectures, primarily those delivered on Zoom, and this is what we got back. Reporting is by Ġorġ Mallia.

"At the start of the pandemic, no one could ever imagine that we will be stuck at home, doing online lectures. However, everyone had to adapt to the situation – lecturers, staff and students," wrote Davinia, which encapsulated what most approached students thought.

Miguel was reasonable in his analysis of having to have online lectures. "Considering the circumstances and the context we are playing in I do not have much to argue, especially since the pandemic did not just hit us students, but also the teachers as well."

Analise also saw things positively, "Personally, I am one of the odd ones that actually enjoys online lectures. It helps me avoid stressful situations like the traffic and morning rush as well the hassle of juggling university, work and my personal life. I also feel more comfortable participating in class and I feel confident saying that most lecturers took a positive approach to online lecturing."

Jordan was also positive: "Many will say that the best thing about this online thing is that you could do the lessons at home and not wake up early (especially the 8 a.m one). However, from my side what I say is that online learning offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons to students. Online learning uses a number of tools, such as videos, PDFs, podcasts, and teachers can use all these tools as part of their lesson plans. By extending the lesson plan beyond traditional textbooks to include online resources, teachers are able to become more efficient educators. Don't get me wrong, in the past teachers were doing that too, but now it is easier because all is online."

Davinia agreed with the 'more relaxed' comment. "I found online lectures much more relaxed – no time spent in traffic, could easily make a coffee and nibble some snacks and stayed in my pajamas for most of the lectures. I found it more convenient to stay at home."

Another student said that "Online classes save us a lot of time, which we can use for studies, assignments and projects."

Not all is roses, however. One student encapsulated what many feel about online lecturing. "Overall, online lectures have been done well, but I do miss the face to face interaction and more instantaneous forms of feedback in-person communication offers. While students like myself are in the comfort of their own homes it is easier to get distracted while learning from home, the University environment and interaction are the two things I miss the most."

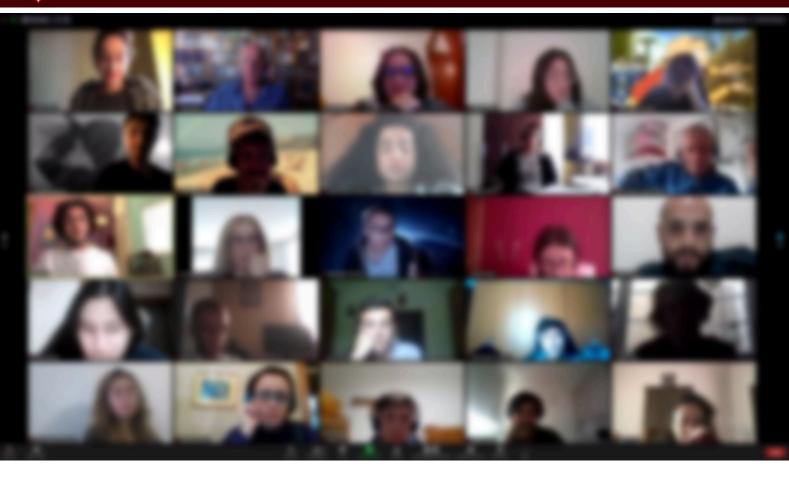
Another student wrote: "On the whole, however, online lectures can never reach the efficiency of on campus class lectures. Only a few very able lecturers manage to really grab the interest of us students, thus the understanding part of learning is somehow complicated."

Jordan agrees with this, though he thinks that lecturers are up to the job, "I do not like having online lessons, because I do not have that classroom feeling during the lessons and there are many distractions. However, each and every teacher is doing their utmost to give us the best education that is needed, despite the limitations."

Miguel has quite extreme feelings about online lecturing, actually comparing it to someone throwing him off a boat weighed down by iron chains! However, he too admits that "when looking back, this department was actually one of the cases were the lecturers did try to make the session more interesting."

One student seems to think that the 'cabbages and kings' axiom has been the order of the day across the board. "Some lecturers managed to keep it interesting ... some not so interesting, some not interesting at all and made me lose interest." Miguel specified who he liked and who he didn't. For the sake of fairness, we will leave the names out, though he did comment rather harshly about a lecturer (from an unnamed department) who insisted that students keep their cameras off; and then singled out one lecturer for "engaging us with the content and not hesistating to stop the lecture if we found any problem."

Overall, online lectures have been done well, but I do miss the face to face interaction and more instantaneous forms of feedback in-person communication offers



Difficulties were pointed out. Davinia wrote: "I found it harder to engage with the lecturers and participate during the classes. I personally find it more daunting to unmute myself and participate. During some lectures, awkward silence was more evident. Cannot not mention how much I miss face to face interaction with my friends and lecturers, and having a coffee on quad during a free."

The lack of social interaction is often mentioned. Jordan: "Another downside is the fact that the students don't really meet and get acquainted and be friends, apart from Messenger or during the lessons while interacting on chat."

Analise said that the university experience is missed, because it was cut short too soon. And on another note, that "the system still has lots of room for improvement, such as improving the communication channel between lecturer and student (since it's mostly limited to email only)."

One student looks at possible ramifications of extended online lecturing. "I feel that it is crucial for young students to live and learn on campus, as online learning will deter their socialising ability. Online learning for the majority and in totality could really have a negative effect on the not so distant future society, as future adults would find it difficult to interact and create relationships that are necessary for the livelihood of the country. Students would be unprepared for the work environment, if the majority of work systems do not change to remote as well."

Another side-effect was highlighted by a student: "Some lecturers give us too much work in certain subjects, maybe because now we are at home. But it's still a bit overwhelming, it is still a time of stress and

anxiety. We, as humans, have suffered the change in our own ways too."

Jordan pointed out that "every student has a different learning style. Some students are visual learners and others thrive in the classroom, while other students are solo learners who get distracted by large groups. Through online learning each can be more independent in the way they learn."

Another student thought that "100% online submissions of assignments works great. This should be the way to go for the future as it is also beneficial for the environment."

But there were also some 'hopeful' comments. Davinia, for example, wrote that "above all, it was a nice experience. I think it will be very difficult for me to change back to my 'normal' University routine as now staying home has become the norm."

Another student gave a nod to the academic staff side of things: "I think that the Faculty and the Department have made every effort to ensure that we get the most out of our online lectures and academic experience." This was actually mentioned by a number of the students. There was no doubt that students appreciated the work done.

An optimistic note, even if one laced with caution, concludes this brief vox pop. "Online learning is an asset, it should definitely become a normal procedure, especially when educators are unable to attend class for some reason or another, so curricula are not delayed any more. However, in my opinion, live lectures on campus give the lecturers much more of an opportunity to get their message across to the students, and to use their individual skills to pass on their knowledge."

Researchers in MAKS win €460,000 of EU funding

An EU-wide research consortium, including the Department of Information Policy & Governance (IPG) in MAKS, has recently been awarded Euro 4.9 million of funding from the EU. The IPG research team led by Dr Aitana Radu has been involved in the design and implementation of the project called CRITERIA (Comprehensive data-driven Risk and Threat Assessment Methods for the Early and Reliable Identification, Validation and Analysis of migration-related risks). IPG is responsible for two main tasks within the 3-year project: (1) the development of risk analysis and vulnerability assessment models and (2) the organization of the pilots and the training programs for the CRITERIA system. The funding share for the work carried out by IPG is €460,000.

Irregular migration and emerging security threats pose increasingly complex and difficult challenges to EU borders. The role of border security agencies is key in countering these threats, but they cannot act in isolation which is why it is very important to develop more cross-sectoral, transdisciplinary and cross-country cooperation in all risk management phases.

The aim of CRITERIA is to strengthen and expand existing risk assessment methods used by border security agencies, to improve their capacity to face emerging security threats. The project will build upon text, media, data and network analysis technology to develop advanced analysis technologies and tools tailored to the comprehensive risk and vulnerability indicators also developed in the CRITERIA methodology.

Security research in the Department of Information Policy & Governance

In the last decade the Department of Information Policy & Governance has embarked on an innovative and ambitious initiative aimed at developing security science as a new discipline. As part of this effort, IPG staff has both coordinated and worked on interdisciplinary research initiatives, activities and projects related either to the theoretical development of the discipline and the study of security science applications in daily life.

IPG was overall Project Co-ordinator in the first ever FP7 project to be co-ordinated by the University of Malta, the SMART project on smart surveillance (2010-2013). This was followed by more work on surveillance in the RESPECT project, also in the EU's new SEC (SECURITY) research stream, only opened in 2007.

One of the most important initiatives taken by IPG in this sector was its key role in launching ESSENTIAL https://www.essentialresearch.eu/ the EU's first Joint PhD programme on Security Science, with five PhD candidates co-supervised by IPG. Another exciting dimension of the Department's work in the field of security science are its contribution to strengthening intelligence oversight by co-hosting the annual



Dr Aitana Radu

UN SRP International Intelligence Oversight Forum and improving intelligence processes through the development of tailored made training program on the use of big data for intelligence analysis (the THESEUS project).

The diversity encountered in the security area has led IPG staff to engage with multiple research topics ranging from improving community policing practices through the development of dedicated mobile apps (CITYCoP project) to preventing radicalization among youth and in prisons (ARMOUR and JP-COOPS projects) and strengthening policejudicial cooperation in preventing crime (SAT-LAW and PRE-RIGHTS projects).

Work in the area of migration is one of the most recent developments in the field of security science.In this new field, in addition to CRITERIA the Department of Information Policy & Governance has been closely involved in the design and implementation of another EU-funded research project which also aims to assist border control agencies in addressing challenges related to migration.

MIRROR (https://h2020mirror.eu/) was the first project in this area and aims to develop an integrated platform, a set of tools, as well as a systematic methodology for the comprehensive inter-media analysis of the perception of Europe, the detection of discrepancies between perception of and reality in Europe, and the creation of awareness for the impact of such misconceptions. Among the most interesting deliverables produced until now in MIRROR, available on the project's website, are the migrant information collection model and the human rights checklist for border security systems.

IPG is currently contributing to the project by developing the analysis of threats to be included and detected by the MIRROR system, as well as by coordinating the piloting of the MIRROR system in Malta, Austria and Sweden. The newly funded CRITERIA project was designed as a follow-up to MIRROR.



Undergraduate work in progress

In Transit: The New Magazine & Digital Publishing Project

Two third-year Bachelor of Communications (Hons.) students, Megan Mallia and Sam Sciberras, write about the work being done to produce the annual Communications students' magazine.

Connection is key. We encounter so many people, places and things, yet so rarely do we slow down to appreciate the relationships paving the path we're threading on.

In Transit is an exploration of these relationships with all their diversity and idiosyncrasies. Connections metamorphose through time and circumstances, and they often also change us. Built on values of authenticity and transparency, the aim of the project is to empower meaningful connections. And it is not just about romantic ones. We are looking at friends, family, passions, places and lots of other relationships.

The project's visual identity is being presented through a bold, iconified reproduction of its name. It is an acronym, IT, illustrated in such a way as to create a visual association with a fountain pen. This is important to the brand's image as it links directly with the concept of storytelling. In an increasingly digital context, it is vital for the visual identity to be adaptable to several scales, colours, and placements. That is why the iconified mark was designed to fit seamlessly with the needs of different platforms.

The chosen body text typeface, *Barlow*, pays homage to early grotesques. Stylistically, distinct comparisons may be drawn to landmark sans serifs. Its font family has eighteen variants, making it incredibly useful and adaptable to the project and its various production requirements, which include both print and digital.

Mikela is being used as a headline font. It is a vintage typeface and it complements the project's



visual identity beautifully. Together with a wellequipped photography and videography team, the aforementioned elements will allow *In Transit* to communicate through a high-quality visual aesthetic.

An integrated approach will be employed for the management and execution of digital channels, including our website. This website is set to be launched in the coming weeks, and shall compile the project's stories, activities and updates in a sleek and responsive manner. *In Transit*'s social media channels will be launched on February 22nd.

There are so many stories worth telling that we are

still setting pen to paper with a definite list. But there are traces of history woven into pre-loved treasures, the sense of community blooming through the smallest elements of the everyday, the eloquence of communication through words and images, and plenty more.

With a global pandemic hindering social contact, we are, nonetheless, celebrating the beauty and power of connection through *In Transit*.





Our Ph.D Students

Rebecca Anastasi



Afterward Temporalities in Contemporary Women's Filmmaking in the Middle East

Rebecca's research explores the ways in which contemporary female filmmakers in the Middle East construct the 'afterwards' in their films, from the point of view of postcolonial aesthetics. In doing so, it asks whether the untimely can be an active, disruptive force, and fertile conceptual ground in reading films made by contemporary Middle Eastern women who engage with the afterwards of ineffaceable events.

This thesis contextualises the study within industrial concerns and asks whether the untimely offers an aesthetic framework which empowers the female postcolonial subject as writer and filmmaker, operating in a globalised industry.

The films in question emerge from Israel, Palestine and Lebanon and include the works of Annemarie Jacir, Nadine Labaki, Elite Zexer, Najwa Najjar, Hanna Elias and Mai Masri.

Rebecca about her co-production of the Maltese film LUZZU

"Luzzu, directed by Alex Camilleri, was almost four years in the making. I had been working in the film servicing sector for 15 years, and as a programmer/curator for the Valletta Film Festival for three years, when Alex approached me to ask whether I'd be interested in helping him produce a feature film set within the world of Maltese traditional fishing. He explained his idea of using non-professional actors – real fishermen – and I was immediately intrigued.

Together with Maltese producer, Oliver Mallia, we set about refining the script and casting, finding our two fishermen leads in early 2018. We then applied for Malta Film Fund production money, and were awarded the grant, with Alex moving between Malta and NY to rehearse with the cast

and build the script around his research. We shot in the autumn of 2019 for five weeks, with a talented and passionate crew, also making use of the Malta Cash Rebate, and this past year was dedicated to finalising postproduction: VFX happened here in Malta, through Stargate Studios Malta; sound design in New York; and colouring, together with picture deliverables, were finalised in Belgium. In the meantime, we were picked up by Memento Films International, who submitted the film to Sundance.

We were thrilled to be accepted in the festival's World Cinema Dramatic Competition – the first Maltese film to be so, but, hopefully, not the last! Reviews have been great! We are aiming to premiere the film in Malta later this year."





Our Ph.D Students

Marthese Borg

Marthese Borg has an undergraduate degree in Linguistics and a Masters in Psycholinguistics from the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Malta. She has just finalised her PhD in Cognitive Science at the same university, focusing on Cultural Cognition and Language Processing.

Humans are a product of both their genetic makeup and the cultural environment that surrounds them. Studying cognition and understanding the human brain, therefore, must look into both the physical and cultural aspects of being human. Marthese specifically chose to focus on how emotion recognition and stereotyping can influence our understanding of language and conversation in Maltese, especially in ambiguous circumstances.

The first part of her research focused on the effects of emotion recognition, or how human beings identify and recognise human emotions such as happiness and sadness, especially through facial expressions. Imagine you are in a situation where you cannot properly understand the person you are speaking to, could their facial expression help you understand them better? Might it confuse you more? Could it have no effect whatsoever? Marthese specifically looked into this question with regards to single words and at this level, the speaker's facial expression seemed to have no effect.

She now intends to investigate this matter further by using whole sentences or, potentially, even short snippets of conversation.

The second part of her research project focused on the effects of stereotyping, or the expectations we have about people based on how they look, sound etc. She concentrated on the stereotypes of gender, age and language background and how such biases could influence a listener's understanding of what is being said. When we converse with people, does our 'image' of them influence what we think will be said or is being said? In this case, Marthese used sentences that could initially have multiple meanings to see if the stereotypes mentioned above would bias the listener to one meaning over the other. She noticed that such stereotypes could guide the listener to one meaning as opposed to another, but that this was time constrained, that is, a certain amount of time was needed for this type of processing. Her plan now is to further this research by using different research methods.

Throughout her research Marthese used an experimental and empirical approach. She utilised the facilities found within the cognitive science lab, such as eye-tracking and EEG, to create and run her experiments.



Marthese is currently the cognitive science lab manager and a research officer at the Department of Cognitive Science. Apart from the above-mentioned interests she is also interested in topics such as embodied cognition (the idea that the mind is not only connected to the body, but that the body and its surroundings also influence the mind) and animal cognition (the study of animal behaviour, communication, personality etc.). Marthese also has a passion for communicating science to diverse audiences and has organized and participated in the department's and faculty's science communication activities in science festivals, schools and other events on various occasions.



Step into MUŻA

Vincianne Scerri, Rakel Vella, Martina Farrugia, Lisa M. Kaehler and Jean-Luke Zammit, under the direction of Mr Anthony Cassar, Digitisation Manager at Heritage Malta and himself a Digital Arts Masters graduate,

During the summer months, BFA in Digital Arts students created an audio-visual projection entitled 'Step into MUŻA' to embellish the central courtyard at the museum.

> The work was done as part of the students' internship at the Digitisation Unit at Heritage Malta.







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