



SHEEPSBODIES

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Spazju Kreattiv – Valletta

CREDITS

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SPACE C, SPAZJU KREATTIV

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Artist Statement – Matthew F. Cassar

This exhibition is an expression of my personal views towards contemporary means of interaction and the way in which we read information. As data is more easily available to us through improved technology the advantages are unquestionable. In the last few years however, I have increasingly noticed the negative effects of this, not merely by the well-known phone alienation to which we are so used to, but also through a certain emptiness even when there are direct exchanges with others.

Very rarely are personal feelings or opinions expressed. Yet many times I have been seeing that this is not merely for privacy or timidity. Most of us don't ask ourselves our opinion or we don't actually give ourselves time to think and be honest about it. If I were to try and search for something online, I would find it very hard to keep my focus, probably being distracted by cute cat gifs and dramatic news reports at the same time, ultimately resulting in me forgetting what I was looking for. There are instructions for everything, and although there aren't any specific rules to follow, there are other people to follow and decide for us what our likes and dislikes should be. All these suggestions and implied expectations can easily result not only in blocking what would be our genuine behavior, but in time it may very well neutralize it by making us forget it.

Another important topic that rises from this information being fed to us is of course desensitization. Even when we feel sensible to a particular topic, how many of us actually get up and do something about it? Do we just post an assertive story for our friends to see on social media? How useful is it for the cause that we want to show as so important to us? Do we feel that what we do is enough? What would be important enough to actually move us? Do we know?

The paintings and the rooms in this exhibition are meant to underline such observations of mine with the amazing help of Lara Calleja, who elaborates this topic in her way through her writing. In my visual work, some images shown are overlapped to recreate the way in which we interact with different media, often seeing multiple images of completely different topics at the same time. Some portraits and figures are deformed, or shown in different positions to express the resulting confusion and loss in self-identity as we are dragged by the multitude of images and information that is fed to us without our specific request. Garbage is also used to represent this, as items that we never looked for end up shaping parts of our interests, opinions and character. Each room intends to express a specific emotional state which I will let the viewers experience without too much direction. As one goes through the exhibition, Lara and I hope to give a positive message, which we hope you feel in your own way.

Artist Statement – Lara Calleja

Sheepsbodies is not a straightforward concept, but that is not the purpose of any art endeavour. As a writing artist, I was mesmerised by the ongoing exploration of the intricate dynamics surrounding fast information and the ever-shifting nature of our identities. This fascination arose within the context of a world that unfolds as a rich tapestry teeming with positive opportunities, all experienced through the lens of a small screen that we willingly choose to engage with for extended periods.

The fact that we 'choose' is even a problem in itself - do we really choose to see the screen each and every day? Or are we influenced to do so by a demanding society? Still, must we forever blame the capitalist society without taking responsibility for our own actions? And once we acknowledge that we do have power over our actions, how will we find the motivation to move away from it all, and find a balance within?

All of these questions were at the heart of what both me and Matthew F. Cassar discussed for hours on end during our informal meetings of chewing over the vastness of this topic. No, it was not easy to narrow it down to anything, but again, that was not the point, but rather to leave that sense of overwhelmingness and embrace it, along with the need to 'narrow it down' - which are both feelings that also vocalize our constant state of mind when we feel overwhelmed by it all. My writing exhibited at Sheepsbodies in Spazju Kreattiv finally encapsulates all these valid sentiments, and presents them as a journey that led to a sense of balance and redemption.

My collaboration with visual artist Matthew F. Cassar was an enlightening one. We were in a constant process of discussing, even juxtaposing ideas, and were both open to what each one had to say. During this process, we kicked off our artistic process - with his painting and visual installations, and me on the other end with my writing. We shared what we created and we were in a process of constant exchange where we considered and re-elaborated what we worked on through each other's eyes.

ROOM 1



Overimposition

Oil on plexiglass, placed on an oil on canvas painting



Bearded Man

Mixed media with reutilised items on wood

Fun Fact: Did you find the dinosaur?



Orange Party

Mixed Media on fabric

BUM BUM IL-BIEB DIN IL-ĦOLMA TA' MIN HI?

Mohħi għoqda tal-ħolm kollu li kelli u li għad irrid niskopri. Għandi biżżejjed hajja niskopri dan il-ħolm kollu? Il-kuluri tal-mowbajl kollha wegħda għal hajja aħjar. Hajja isbaħ. Itlaq. Mur dur id-dinja. Siefer. Ixtri vann. Ġib kelb. Aqta' mid-dinja. Andrea u Joslyn hekk għamlu. Kienet il-ħolma kkulurita mifruxa għalihom minn Instagram. Reel fuq reel fuq reel ta' koppji li qatgħu mid-dinja mgħagġla. Reels infiniti b'algoritmi li jitimgħu ħolma. Imma l-ħolma ta' min hi? Joslyn u Andrea dlonk qalu "din hi l-ħolma tagħna." Ġemmghu biex jitolqu kollox. Xtraw vann. Nirrangawh. Nghixu fih u nduru d-dinja. House on wheels. Dreaming big. Towards sunrises and coffee. Towards sunsets and wine. Il-vann ġie jiswa iktar milli hasbu. Setgħu xtraw dar f'xi villaġġ idilliku ta' Franza. Imma let's be real man, qalet Joslyn lil Andrea, now is the time to test ourselves. Vera rriduha din il-ħaġa? Jew ħa nħallu l-ispejjeż iwaqqfuna mill-ħolma tagħna?" U Joslyn diġà bdiet timmagina lilha nnifisha tintelaq mal-ħaxix, waqt li Andrea jsajrilha xi biċċa ħuta li qabdu, waqt li tisma' 'l playlist Songs of The Celtic Forests, għaddej bil-JBL Bluetooth.

U bħal Joslyn u bħal Andrea hemm ingħaqad ħolm ieħor ta' nies oħra li kull minuta jiskopru ħolma ġdida. Inkluzja jien. Inhit hwejġi. Nintela' pjanti ta' ġewwa. Dawk tajbin għan-nifs. Importanti jkollok. Hawn wisq dhaħen f'dawn l-ibliet il-kbar kollhom arja mnigġsa. U nibqa' ndawwar b'subgħajja - nirreġistra ħames stejjer f'għaxar sekondi. Tiskrollja. Yoga classes. Għandi bżonn yoga classes. Wisq ġenn. Jikkalmani naħseb. It grounds me. I need the grounding. Niskrollja niskrollja. Das-sufan x'inhu sabiħ? Dan second hand? Kemm joqgħodli sabiħ mal-pjanti, Nagħmel kafè. Waqt li nieħu l-kafè, jġini ħsieb. Naqbad il-mowbajl. Nieħu stampa. Stampa tal-Kafè, tal-Ktieb u u tas-Sufan Vintage. U l-kurta kkuttunata nitfagħha pulita u simmetrika mas-sufan li xtrajt second hand, u l-pjanti li qed jirnexxili nkabbar indoor ukoll indaħħalhom fil-frej. SNAP. Nieħu r-ritratt. SHARE. Tela' fis-socials. Inwarrab il-mowbajl. Naqbad il-ktieb. Nibda naqra. M'għandix paċenzja. Nerga' naqbad il-mowbajl. Għandi 5 reacts diġà. Dopamina. Nerga' niskrollja.

Il-kafè kesah. Il-kutra baqgħet mitwija. U l-ktieb ma tlesta qatt.

KNOCK KNOCK WHOSE DREAM IS THIS?

My mind is a web of dreams that exist and have yet to be discovered. Will I live long enough to roam through them all? The hues blending on my mobile device convey the promise of a better life. A brighter future than today. Go. Travel. See the world. Purchase a van. Adopt a dog. Forget the chains that bind you to this world. Andrea and Joslyn did precisely that. From the colourful posts on Instagram, they were inspired by the same dreams. Reel upon reel upon reel of lovers who left the normal realms of the fast world. Infinite reels with dream-feeding algorithms. But whose dreams are these dreams? Joslyn and Andrea questioned this themselves, and finally said "Yes, this is our dream." They packed and left everything. They bought a van. We will fix it. We will live and tour the world. House on wheels. Dreaming big. Towards sunrises and coffee. Towards sunsets and wine. The van's expenses were more than predicted. Same as buying a house in an idyllic village in France. But let's be real man, said Joslyn to Andrea, now is the time to test ourselves. Do we really want this? Or shall we let the costs stop us from fulfilling our dreams? Joslyn was already envisioning herself reclining on the grass, while Andrea would be prepping a freshly caught fish, all while she enjoyed the Songs of *The Celtic Forests* playlist humming through the Bluetooth speaker.

Similar to Joslyn and Andrea, the dreams of others have entangled with theirs, revealing a new dream every minute. And so did I. Sowing my own clothes. Having my own indoor plants. Oh, they're good for breathing. So crucial to have. Too much smoke in the cities. They purify the air. I keep scrolling and registering five stories in ten seconds. Yoga classes. I need yoga classes. I feel overly stressed, it will make me relax.. It will ground me. I need the grounding. I scroll and scroll. Oh, how beautiful is the sofa? Is this second-hand? How nice it can fit so well with the plants. I go and make a coffee. While drinking the coffee, a thought crosses my mind. I place the freshly poured coffee near my recently purchased yoga book. I placed the quilted blanket I intended to knit but ended up buying instead. I threw it neatly and symmetrically against the vintage sofa that I bought second-hand. SNAP. The frame features the numerous indoor plants I purchased this month, depleting half my paycheck. SHARE. Uploaded in my socials. I put the mobile phone aside. I grab the book. I start to read. My patience fails me. I pick up the phone again. 5 reactions already. Dopamine rush. I scroll again.

The coffee stands cold. The blanket still folded. And the book never finished.



Trash Portrait 2

Mixed media with reutilised items on canvas stretched on panel

Description: This series of portraits made out of trash represent the futility of things that we attach ourselves to and that end up forming our image passively. This particular portrait also emphasizes the indecision that one can end up in if self awareness is not sought and one just passively drifts towards suggestions. The materials used include plastic bottles, pieces of unutilised wood, plastic caps, pieces of fabric and old toys.



Trapped in a Party
Mixed media on wood



Poncho in Red
Fabric paint on fabric



Yellow Denim Jacket
Fabric paint on denim



Indecision,
Oil and Acrylic on wood



Flower Trash,
Mixed media with reutilised items
on wood



Trash Portrait 3
Mixed media with reutilised items
on canvas stretched on panel

ARAHA ĠEJJA
ARAHA ĠEJJA
DIN IL-HOLMA MIN TAHILEK?

Wegħda għal hajja ahjar

Inti kollok kuluri.

Kuluri l'għad trid tiskopri ġo fik.

Mur tir f'nofs il-kuluri, li għadek trid issib.

Għum qalb kulur; iwiegħdek se jimlik

Oqgħod f'nofs ilwieni; vjola, blu w roża

F'imnifsejk ibla' kollox; ma teżisti l-ebda doża

Imraħ imraħ; imraħ iva sal-infinit

Thalli l-ebda swidija, tidhol tgħawwar ġewwa fik.

Intlift f'medda ta' lwien, u qed insibni nistaqsi, imma dawn l-ilwien minn dejjem ġibduni?
U hekk kif naqdef fi lwieni vjola, sofor, roża, blu, qed inħossni iktar negħreq f'dak kollu li
jista' jkun.

għada, pitgħada u l-ġranet kollha li għad ġejjin.

Fjura roża għal ħolma ġdida. Xagħar vjola għal "ribelluża". H dura għal dinja isbaħ. Hmura
għal qalb verament furuża.

Isfar paċi, blu infinit,

Thawwadt nifhem, x'inhu vera dak li rrid.

Nimla moħħi dinja kuluri. Inħossni negħreq ġewwa fih.

Fejn jien?

U naqbad il-blu, u l-isfar jaħrabli.

U nimraħ mal-bjuda, imma l-vjola jsabbatni.

U l-iswed jaħkimni, jsawwatni mal-art.

Nimmira għal ħolma, nispara fil-vojt.

Nirranka għal oħra, imma jtellifni l-isfond.

Għajejt, xbajt. Ma nafx iktar min jien.

X'inhu tiegħi? x'inhu tagħhom? X'inhu vera dak li rrid?

IT COMES
NEARER AND NEARER
THIS DREAM, WHO DOES IT BELONG TO?

A promise for a better tomorrow

Oh you, a canvas of colours so bright,
Hues within you, waiting to ignite.
Soar through the spectrum, let them unfurl,
Dive into shades, where fulfillment swirls.

Stand amidst purple, blue, and pink,
Inhale deeply, let your spirit link.
Roam freely in the infinite hue,

No darkness should linger, your light renews.

I find myself lost in a sea of colours. Asking, have I always been drawn to this palette? As I navigate through hues of purple, yellow, pink, and blue, I feel engulfed by a sea of possibilities, drowning in the uncertainties of what could be. Of tomorrow, the day after, and the days ahead. Pink flower for a new dream. Purple hair for rebellion. Green a for a better world. Red for a fiery heart. Yellow for peace, and blue for the infinite. Amidst this all I still ask, what is it that I truly desire?

My brain is brimmed with a world full of colours. I feel myself drowning amidst it all.
Where am I?

And I seize hold of the blue, but the yellow escapes me.
And I navigate amidst whiteness, but the purple overwhelms me.
The black engulfs me. It strikes me down to the floor.

I point at one dream, I shoot into nothingness.
I aim at another, but everything overwhelms me.

I don't know who I am anymore.
What is mine? What is theirs? What is it really that I desire?



Soldier

Acrylic on colored fabric

Description: I enjoy contrasting the subject with the method. Here I created that contrast between the aggressive soldier painted in a joyous manner. When I apply this method I often speak of the desensitization that we experience due to the manner in which content is presented to us – too fast and out of context.



Bearded Man 2

Mixed media with reutilised items
on fabric stretched on wood

Dark Denim Jacket

Fabric paint on denim

Fun Fact: All my works on clothing are meant to be worn. They can be thrown in the washing machine and nothing will happen to the image



Whale on Coat

Fabric paint on fabric



Room 3 is a video installation showing the process of making many of the visual works exhibited. The full video will be uploaded online at the end of the exhibition. However there are a number of videos showing the making of individual works available on the visual artist's Instagram profile.

Link: [Matthew F. Cassar](#)



**HUDUHA LA TRIDUHA
DAN IL-ĦOLMA M'ĠHANDNIEX X'NAMBUHA**

Inqaċċat 'l hemm, inqaċċat 'l haw'.

Dawn il-kuluri taqqluni, għal naqra gharrquni.

Inħossni rrid infiq. infiq mill-kuluri, ħolm infinit li għeriqt fih.

Ħlomt ħlomt...

Ġhomt fil-ħolm li ma ssarraġ qatt.

Qdift qdift, biex nerga' nsib l-art

Sa fl-aħħar sibt, din l-art blata soda.

Qalb sema infinita, lewn ikħal u roża.

'Mma hija infinita bħall-ħolm infinit li johroġ mill-aġġegġ kollu dija? X'inh i d-differenza bejn il-ħolm li tqanqal is-sema, u l-ħolm li l-mowbajl inibbet ġewwa fija? Qed inhoss bżonn nitqaxxar, inqaxxar, dak kollu li trabba' ġo fija. Biex forsi nifhem x'inh u vera mill-bqija.

U nfittex dak 'il bogħod, 'il bogħod mid-dija,

U nistenna s-sema, fi triqitha għas-swidiġa.

L-għabex għeb, u fl-aħħar il-lejl isikket kollox.

Mohħi, Nifsijiet i. Il-madwar. Maġija.

U f'dik is-sikta tal-lejl, nagħlaq bil-mod għajnejja.

U ż-żiffa nħossha, 'ssellem 'l mnifsejja.

Is-swaba' jintebħu, bil-blat taħt idejja.

Dlonk niftakar, fil-piż ta' riġlejja

Inħoss l-art ta' taħti sserrahni; saqajja, idejja.

Insir parti mill-art, mis-sema,

it-tnejn jidħlu f'imnifsejja.

Noqgħod ftit hekk. Minuta, tnejn, għaxra.

Nifs ġewwa bil-mod, inaddafni,

Nifs barra 'l bogħod, iserrahni.

Inħossni nitbattal u nsir voj t.

Mhux voj t li jbeżża', 'mma voj t li jneżża'.

Voj t li jqaxxrek u jbattlek.

Minn haw aghżel: instabat f'qigh ix-xifer, jew inbena mill-ġdid.

**TAKE IT IF YOU WANT IT,
THIS DREAM, I HAVE NO USE FOR IT**

Pulling out, Pulling in,
These hues have weighed me down, almost pulling me beneath.
I sense the need to heal. Heal from all the colours, from all the infinite I have
drowned myself in.

I dreamed, I dreamed.
I swam amidst dreams never realized,
I rowed and strove, towards a land materialised.

Finally,
a shore with rocks steadfast,
'Neath vast skies, pink and blue cast.

Yet is it boundless as dreams from a device's glow? What sets apart dreams from the sky and
those from the screen's show? A yearning to be bare, free from all that's sown. To fathom
what's real, from illusions, I've known.

And I seek what is awry in the fading light,
And I wait for the sky, embracing the night,
As sunset surrenders, the darkness brings quietude.
Magic envelopes my mind, my breaths, my night view.

And in the silence, my eyes softly close,
Breeze caresses, against all that is me; it flows.
As my fingers discern, the rocks beneath my hand,
I soon became aware, my legs grounded on land.

The earth beneath me soothes me; my legs, my hands.
The earth, the sky; a connection withstands,
both within me, they now firmly stand,
I linger like this, in minutes of trance.

Inhale slow, a cleansing spree,
Exhale distant, soothing me.
I feel stripped, a void I become,
A weightless empty; it whispers no harm.

A void that clears.
From here you choose; crash beyond the edge, or build it all anew.

ROOM 4

At Ease

Oil and Acrylic on canvas

Fun Fact: This is one of the largest paintings I made so far, measuring two meters in length



Observed

Oil and acrylic on wood



Male Figure

Oil and Acrylic on canvas

**TAF TBIKKIK, TAF TPAXXIK
DIN IŻ-ŻIFNA HIJA TIEGHEK**

U l-lejl itemm mal-bidu taż-żerniq. U tibda tnejji ruħha għodwa sabiħa. Bil-kalma u fil-kalma, l-art tqum, hekk kif ix-xemx tkompli tissaħħaħ ftit ftit, u tiddefinixxi l-kuluri kollha tal-madwar. Bħal ma d-dlam tal-lbieraħ iħassar kull linja u kollox isir ħaġa waħda, l-għodwa terġa', bir-reqqa kollha terġa' tibda l-ħidma tagħha tat-tpingija. Minn sbieħha sa nofs il-vjaġġ tagħha fis-sema, tkompli tirfina u tpitter. Kull linja tiddefinixxi ħaġa minn oħra; il-fjura ħamra tas-silla mill-ħamrija; ras is-siġra ħadra minn ma' għonqha twil kannella; il-baħar mis-sema b'linja ċirku orizzont. Min-nofs is-sema tinżel bil-mod lura, biex ftit ftit il-kuluri u l-forom kollha, jerggħu jinbelgħu mil-lejl. Ċirku infinit.

Imma anke x-xemx titgħatta bis-sħab, u anke d-dlam jitniffed bid-dwal. Anke x-xemx taf taħraq u tkisser, anke l-lejl jaf ikasbar u joqtol. Kakofonija ta' suppost u mhux suppost li eżista u li qatt mhu ħa jeżisti

Imma llum iddeċidejt. Li l-istorja tal-lum, mhux t'għada u tal-lbieraħ, mhux ta' dak jew tal-bqija,

L-istorja tal-lum ħa ngħidha jien.

Imbagħad għada, naraw.

IT MAY LEAD YOU, IT MAY STRAY YOU
THIS JOURNEY IS YOURS

The night yields to the dawn and the setting for a beautiful morning commence. Serenely, the earth stirs to life, and the sun slowly gains its force, and starts meticulously defining the palette of the earth's colours. Much like yesterday's darkness dissolving into nothingness, the morning, with deliberate care, recommences its artistic task. From its rise to the mid-point of the sun's celestial journey, it consistently refines and paints.

Each stroke marks a distinction: the red clover flower from the earth, the tree's green crown from its lengthy brown neck, and the sea from the sky with a circular horizon. From the mid-point, the sky descends gradually, reclaiming all colours and forms as the night slowly swallows them once more. An infinite circle.

Yet, even the sun hides behind the clouds, and even the darkness is stabbed with lights. Even the sun has the ability to scorch and fracture, just as the night holds the power to overwhelm and extinguish. A cacophony of the 'should be' and the 'shouldn't be' of all the things that exist and will never exist.

So today, I've made a decision. I will be the one to narrate today's story. Not the story of tomorrow or yesterday. Not a story of theirs or anyone else's.

Today's story will be mine to tell.
Then tomorrow, we'll see.



Portrait Forming out of Trash
Mixed media with reutilised items on canvas

Double Female Nude
Colored pen on paper

Fun Fact: This is the same model of the large painting (At Ease) in the same room



Bus 105
Mixed media on cardboard

Sheepsbodies?

Il-kelma 'Sheepsbodies' hija inspirata minn terminu slang 'dogsboddy'. Dan it-terminu kienjigi użat mir-Royal Navy, b'referenza għal uffiċjali ż-żgħar bla esperjenza, li generalment kienu jiġu mqabba jagħmlu l-aktar xogħlijiet skomdi u spjaċjevoli. B'hekk it-terminu jinstiga sens ta' serviltà. U daqs kemm il-kelb mitlub jobdi, in-nagħġa tagħżel li ssegwi. B'hekk, permezz tal-frażi 'sheepsbodies', se nesploraw l-istess idea ta' serviliżmu, u kif dan jinfluwenza l-identità tagħna. Ir-riflessjoni ta' din it-tema se tkun qed tħares lil hinn minn biss il-qagħda soċjali imposta - bħal klassi soċjali, religjon jew grad ta' impjeg. Minflok se tkun qed tiffoka iktar fuq l-għażla personali ta' x'tagħżel li ssegwi u minn min niġu influwenzati - dan kollu fi hdan ir-realtà moderna tal-midja soċjali. Ser isir ukoll vjaġġ individwali, lil hinn u lil hemm, minn dawn il-proċessi, biex naslu għall-esperjenza unika u individwali ta' kull bniedem.

Sheepsbodies?

The term 'Sheepsbodies' finds its roots in the colloquial expression 'dogsboddy'. The latter term is used within the Royal Navy to describe greenhorn junior officers, typically tasked with arduous and disagreeable duties. Consequently, the term implies a submissive demeanor. Just like a dog is instructed to obey, a sheep chooses to follow. Therefore, by delving into the concept of 'sheepsbodies', we aim to examine the notion of servility and its impact on one's identity. This exploration goes beyond the confines of externally imposed societal factors - such as social class, religion, or occupational status. Instead, the focus shifts towards the personal choices of whom or what we decide to follow, all within the contemporary context of social media. The journey will extend beyond prescribed social norms, encompassing individual processes that culminate in each person's distinct and personal experience.

For any queries regarding these works or for the proposal of future projects kindly contact the artists directly.

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A donation will be made to ALS Malta from the sales of these works.