

VALLETTA DESIGN CLUSTER



The Valletta Design Cluster is a community space for cultural and creative practice, situated in the renovated Old Abattoir (Il-Biċċerija l-Antika) in Valletta, and focusing on design, entrepreneurship and social impact. It supports and promotes user-centred design as a catalyst for innovation, and as a multi-disciplinary approach that can create positive impacts for communities and individuals.

The Valletta Design Cluster is a legacy project of the 2018 European Capital of Culture in Valletta, aimed at providing space and opportunities to Malta's burgeoning cultural and creative operators. It is a project steeped in the rich history of Valletta, providing a bridge between 450 years of urban activity and Valletta's future. The key human contributors to this major regeneration effort are the Valletta residents and neighbouring communities together with cultural and creative professionals in design-intensive practices.

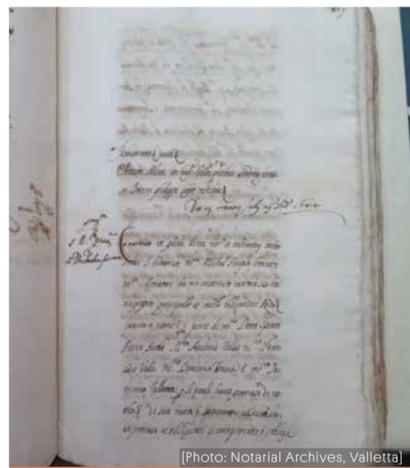
The Valletta Design Cluster is harnessing this energy, tapping into national and European funds

and expertise in the creative economy, and building on the legacy of the Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture. When finished, the space will include dedicated resources and areas for co-working, a fully equipped makerspace, meeting rooms and conference facilities for seminars, workshops and adult learning, a food space, studios for long-term tenants, and a new public garden covering the full roof space of the building. The Valletta Design Cluster will also have its own practitioner in residence spaces, with two apartments that can double up as international project labs for visiting creative practitioners, makers and researchers

Following a three-year process of community engagement in the development of the concept and in-depth analysis of the needs of the sector, as well as interaction with the various communities that constitute the living link between the vibrancy of Valletta's past and future, the major works on the conversion of the Old Abattoir site into the main base of the Valletta Design Cluster took off in 2017. The project's strategic objective is to contribute to the urban regeneration efforts being carried

out by government in the mainly residential, Marsamxett side of Valletta, and specifically to improve social, cultural and economic well-being through investment in improved cultural infrastructure that generates new common spaces for the community to interact, as well as sustained economic activity and employment.

The site of the Old Abattoir (il-Biċċerija l-Antika) in Valletta has been identified for regeneration and conversion into the Valletta Design Cluster. The Old Abattoir is one of Valletta's earliest buildings, but has undergone many changes since its first use as an abattoir in the 17th century. During the early 18th century, the building was used as residences and soldiers' barracks and, following that, light industrial uses were introduced, including cotton spinning and bakeries, with some of the bakers' ovens still in use until the late 1980s and in evidence on site to this day. Although earmarked for housing improvement in the latter part of the 20th century, the identified interventions never took place and the building has stood in an advanced state of disrepair for the past decade.

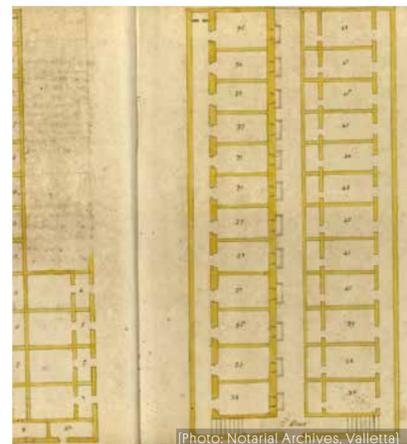


[Photo: Notarial Archives, Valletta]

1644 - The Beginning

Deed to construct slaughterhouse (Biċċerija) from Notarius Pietro Vella

On this date an agreement was signed between the Order of St John and the masterbuilders for the construction of a slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouse remained operational for only a few decades and was soon converted into residential units.

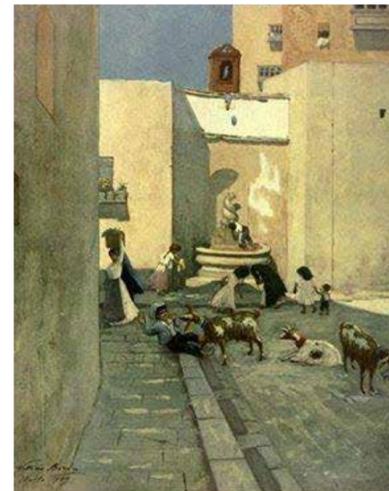


[Photo: Notarial Archives, Valletta]

1735 - The Extension

Plans for extension of building and construction of first floor

The building was extended towards St Christopher Street and a whole new upper floor was also constructed. Units were rented out to Valletta residents, many of whom had small manufacturing and commercial interests both on site and at other hotspots in Valletta, including the Old Market.



1800s - The Fountain

Fountain on St Christopher Street

While the building's central courtyard had previously always been open and connected to Old Mint Street, this period saw the construction of a fountain between the two blocks facing St Christopher Street, together with a niche to Our Lady of Mount Carmel on top of the fountain. The water of the fountain is linked to a freshwater spring found on the same site as early as 1566, and also shown in early maps of Valletta.



[Photo: R. Ellis (attributed)]

Early 1900s – Street Life

Street scene at Bull Street, next to Biċċerija

Throughout most of the 20th century, both the Old Abattoir building (know locally as Il-Biċċerija l-Antika) and the surrounding streets were very densely populated, reflecting Valletta's centrality as cultural, commercial and economic hub under British rule. The building was designated for slum-clearance in the post-WWII period, but the demolition works were never carried out.



[Photo: Valletta Design Cluster]

2018 – New Life

Conversion works into the Valletta Design Cluster

Following a period of neglect and decline, conversion works are underway to rehabilitate the building as the new Valletta Design Cluster. The final layout and functions of the new facilities have been identified through a long and intensive engagement process with residents, creatives, activists and local cultural organisations, both public and independent.