

Since launching 34 years ago, AP has strived to learn lessons from the city it calls home – Valletta – extrapolating them into wider, transferable principles of place-making. With almost half a millennium’s lifespan under its belt, Valletta is a laboratory and fertile sink of knowledge on architecture, design and urbanity – its stories valuable to sites beyond. The condition of the capital has always mirrored wider, global challenges, which is why AP Valletta remains faithful to designing for it and learning from it. Being so attuned to the city, AP recognises what today’s most urgent challenges are. They tie to environmental degradation, exhaustion of resources, carbon governance, and a redefinition of social equity and well-being.

Its team recognises that its reach is, and must be, greater than its nexus. For this to happen, AP Valletta remains committed to:

Rigour

AP is an architectural, heritage and urban regeneration expert. Its team makes and will continue to make architecture and spaces that last. AP Valletta sees buildings and places as masts that exist within environmental, economic, social and civic flux. Their technicality, structural soundness, environmental response, materials, robustness, adaptability, and beauty must hold strong in the sway of that flux.

Resolution

It is increasingly difficult to build righteously. AP Valletta’s pledge is to continue to do so resolutely. If ever the practice is held back by external forces, its conviction will be to lead more boldly.

Dialogue

For almost 500 years, Valletta has wrangled with the contentions of human endeavour and need for progression. Its fabric has withstood crises of war, poverty, irrelevance, dis-connectivity, and commodification. AP Valletta’s buildings have been protagonists in this story of urban resistance. The practice’s conviction is to continue to interrogate and understand the ability of the built environment to grapple with humanity’s biggest challenges. AP’s team does this from its home on Sappers Street, in Valletta, poised and prepared to face the wider, global architectural wilderness.

MANIFESTO SKETCH

In its long-standing role as an incubator for thinking, writing, speaking and designing, AP Valletta remains focused on addressing this century’s most pressing urban problems through all its projects. The practice works to understand how urban life impacts human progression, and how the architectural profession is best placed to shape it. AP Valletta’s ‘manifesto’ is a ceaseless exercise, and more akin to an evolving sketch than a completed work. Its aim is to be an ever-morphing, forward-facing organism of improvement. This document gives a snapshot of that sketch at this point in time. It presents AP’s ‘mandate for the future’, as envisioned by its new leadership. Each text outlines a nuanced problem and explores thought process around its resolution – at varying scales and intensities – and always through the lens of the practice, its research, people, and projects.

LEADERSHIP

In 2025, AP Valletta welcomes seven new leaders into its practice. Each has a unique and dedicated history with the practice – their personal strengths have supported its full spectrum of services for many years. Their appointment signals a reinvigoration of AP’s values, approach, and output. Both locally and on an international stage, AP Valletta continues to set standards through the quality of its work – its fusion of research and application, its interest in inter-disciplinarity, and its technical and design calibre. The ideas in this Manifesto Sketch are individual, conveying the thoughts of each new partner and associate partner, but the vision is collective, focused, and deliberate.

OUR VOCATION TO CRAFT MEANINGFUL SPACES

Rosanne Asciak

Architecture, at its core, carries great responsibility. It must reconcile rapid technological advances, the urgency of climate and biodiversity crises, and evolving social values. In an era where construction is often viewed as a villain, complicit in detrimental environmental impact, we, as architects, are compelled to redefine our purpose. Shouldn’t our mission be to create buildings that resonate deeply with their surroundings, embody empathy, and allow people to feel connected and rooted?

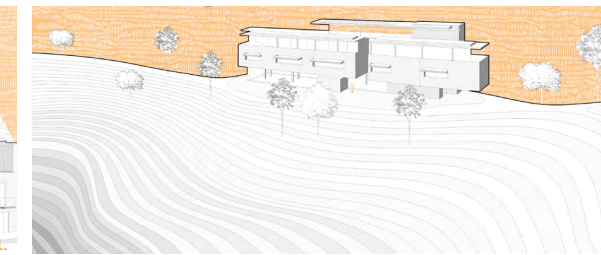
Our quest must extend beyond making sustainable and energy efficient buildings; it must also be a commitment to fostering human connection and belonging. The most enduring architecture, that truly withstands the passage of time, is that which blends technical excellence with emotional resonance. It’s about creating buildings with a soul, spaces that inspire because they are deeply connected to their context and users. We must galvanise a renewed pride in our profession, reigniting the understanding for ourselves and the next generation of architects that we do not merely construct buildings; we shape the human experience in ways that are intimate, meaningful and transformative. Shifting the dial on

Danica Cachia Mifsud

harmful building practices demands a resurgence of pride and purpose within ourselves and for the architects to follow. We can’t fake pride in our vocation; it must be designed through intentional, thoughtful practice – where architecture is not simply a reaction to the pressing demands of our world, but a testament to the power of design in shaping our lives.

1. St John’s Gardens, Phoenicia Hotel, Valletta, Malta
Transforming St John’s Ditch into an extension of the Phoenicia Hotel’s grounds; adding provision through restoration and rebuild; enhancing biodiversity and conserving the historic site.

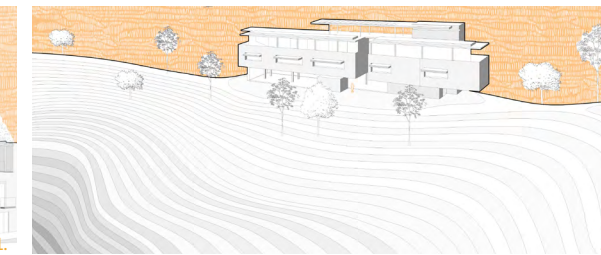
2. Riviera Hotel, Ghajn Tuffieha, Malta
Designing a new hotel overlooking the Riviera coastline; reinterpreting elements of classic urban Maltese buildings; two-storey elevated building aims to provide public space at ground floor level; minimal massing and layered façades in-keeping with terraced landscape contours.



Rory Apap Brown

Commitment to quality comes at a cost. AP has invested in quality since its inception – applying vocational stamina, the gumption of fighting for an idea, copious research into innovation and contextual considerations, collective team momentum and persuasion, and the monotony of constantly negotiant delivery, to name but a few. Direct investment might present, initially, as yet another cost. But in many ways, it has the power to consolidate the rest.

Self-financing grants full creative control, enabling scenarios that truly embody the ethos and intellectual principles embraced by AP. When the proverbial money is put to mouth, traditional constraints partially evaporate, freeing up more oxygen for what we really want to make.

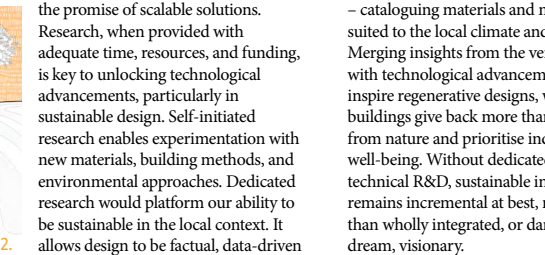


Charles Sciberras

The challenges we face as a consequence of unbridled local and global development are multifaceted: unsustainable housing practices, environmental degradation, and, in Malta’s case specifically, a lack of integrated urban planning. Malta has seen rapid development, leading to unaffordable housing, poor infrastructure, and urban sprawl. These trends contribute to social isolation, strained communities, and environmentally damaging practices like over-quarrying. Crucially, climate-resilient infrastructure is absent. Measures that could pre-empt extreme weather events are non-existent, and the status quo remains reactionary.

There is a dire disconnect between planners and the communities affected by built projects – we have knowingly exacerbated social equity issues. Innovation should be framed as a phased, pragmatic “super-project.” We need to get specific: enforcing legal guidelines and enhancing the use of innovative building technologies and materials. This will not only curb our habit of dismantling the natural environment, but also foster collaboration between developers, authorities, designers, and communities around one unified goal – to excel. Where it matters most.

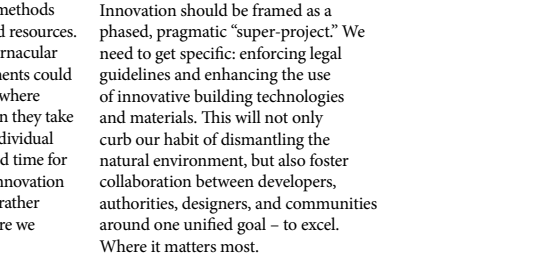
Self-starting research would unlock the potential for the curation of a ‘sustainability palette’ for the islands – cataloguing materials and methods suited to the local climate and resources. Merging insights from the vernacular with technological advancements could inspire regenerative designs, where buildings give back more than they take from nature and prioritise individual well-being. Without dedicated time for technical R&D, sustainable innovation remains incremental at best, rather than wholly integrated, or dare we dream, visionary.



Jacques Borg Barthet

Thinking about solutions at urban scale requires a process of de-fragmenting – of understanding systemic relationships in order to address the totality of malignities at play within the built environment. Currently, development in Malta is facilitated through piecemeal sanctioned permits, but the needs of towns and the island’s larger conurbation are not addressed holistically. It is a kind of urban myopia that demands reconsideration. We need to think at an urban scale – to act as standard-bearers for urban solutions which are at once targeted and specific, yet compound.

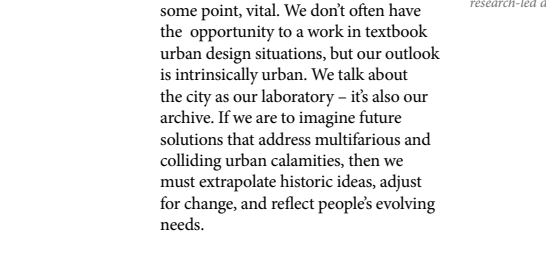
AP knows how to design public realms. Our work in Valletta has, over three decades, played a major role in weaving the cohesive urban fabric of the city. It connects different parts of it and makes it work in ways that are, or were at some point, vital. We don’t often have the opportunity to work in textbook urban design situations, but our outlook is intrinsically urban. We talk about the city as our laboratory – it’s also our archive. If we are to imagine future solutions that address multifarious and colliding urban calamities, then we must extrapolate historic ideas, adjust for change, and reflect people’s evolving needs.



Simone Vella Lenicker

We need to think bigger, but we also need to think harder. AP has a unique ability to create buildings that amplify identity. We know how to design places that align with forward-facing ideals and values – we excel in shaping projects where clients, particularly those with ambitious ESG strategies, are looking to implement their sustainability and social responsibility commitments. This matters because those responsibilities benefit everyone. Providing an impeccable architectural and engineering service and improving the state of the world are not mutually exclusive things. Clients want buildings that reflect their ambitions and standards, not just for themselves but also for future generations.

Instead, we must interrogate how to create incubators that hold what came before in symbiosis with what we identify with now, as well as with what might come next.



Erica Giusta

The concept of ‘future heritage’ as a dynamic and evolving notion – one which challenges traditional views of heritage as static, precious, or historical – is central to the conversation on imagining viable and vibrant futures for our built environments. The definition of heritage must expand beyond the monumental and reach to the mundane – it must include ordinary buildings, materials, and human labour; recognising that everything that has involved energy, effort or intention qualifies as heritage. A more malleable and inclusive definition of heritage will, by nature, encompass sustainability goals. Sustainability practices within



heritage regeneration themselves

must be more rounded, moving beyond operational carbon efficiency into the domains of identity and ownership, material histories, land use and extraction, incremental and outright demographical impacts, etc. Our legacy of investment into existing buildings must endure. But for it to have real value, it must de-shackle from the idea of freezing history into one point in time.

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David Felice and Konrad Buhagiar, Founding Partners

Founding *Architecture Project*

The foundation of AP Valletta begins with a relationship and a time. The relationship: Malta's architecture and its identity. The time: 1991.

To start with, there was a name – Architecture Project – it in itself a manifesto declaring the need for a project that could lift Maltese architecture out of its protracted lethargy. In terms of architectural theory and practice, the 19th century had delivered. But the vitality of its conversation had dwindled by the tail-end of the 20th. Past Malta's Independence, the urgency to define the relationship between architecture and national identity had, with some exceptions, given way to a tolerated despondency.

The 'project', therefore, became the re-ignition of architecture as a starter for cultural discourse and critical thinking. Architecture Project started as a mandate to create places that authentically engaged with their *genius loci* and held timelessness at their core. This intention holds firm 30 years on, first as AP, later as AP Valletta.

Back then, in 1991, conversations centred around themes relating to Malta's urban life and environment. In many ways, they were not dissimilar from today's. Planning, hitherto piecemeal and erratic, had recently been established on a firm basis with the setting up of the Planning Authority and, as expected, the islands' economic growth became inextricably connected to its policy making mission and operation. Infrastructural issues, especially related to housing and urban planning, were paramount especially in the wake of a nascent over-development. The latter consequently engendered an urgent need for the preservation of both the built and natural heritage of the islands. The intensity and tone of the discourse, however, were different from that of today and priorities, dissimilar. This was a time when the resistance to architecture was a product of the island's isolation and the lack of understanding, acceptance, or even motivation that resulted from it. Today, geographic barriers are a thing of the past and the local population, in constant contact with developments in architecture at large, understand more, care more, and are aching for improvement. Sadly, however, the erstwhile apathy has been substituted by financial pressures and concerns of commercial viability, which often overshadow and diminish design quality and originality.

In the face of this, AP continues to keep its eye on its original intentions. But while holding that attention, the practice – functioning, as it does, in line with its founding ambition – must differentiate between what is 'legacy' and what is 'excellence'. When starting a practice, the allure of leaving behind a legacy is strong and important. The promise of legacy energises the creative mind, generating momentum even at times where external forces dampen the enthusiasm that comes with creativity. Legacy, however, is ineffable, because mutable and, to some extent, unattainable.

The pursuit of the unreachable is, however, a form of personal assurance. It instils humility and drives continued excellence. This should always be the real ambition. Legacy does not exist in isolation and cannot be an ultimate goal. It risks fostering ego rather than authentic achievement. Legacy is most important as a by-product of unwavering dedication to quality and principles. For AP Valletta, this perspective maintains the integrity of the initial project: a commitment to experimentation and evolution, and the pursuit of the universal good.



Rosanne Asciak, Partner

Rosanne is an architect, since 2005, and ahead of Partnership was one of AP Valletta's Design Directors. She earned a BE&A (Hons) in Architecture and Civil Engineering from the University of Malta and began her career in a small practice, gaining hands-on experience on various stages of project life cycles from design through to site execution. Since joining AP in 2008, Rosanne has played a pivotal role in projects of varying scale, including the award-winning Barrakka Lift in Valletta, which she considers a career milestone.

Over the years, she has led the design of high-end residential projects, including two recently completed projects – Naxxar House and Villa Cantilena – which reflect her commitment to intimate, client-focused, human-scaled design. Currently, Rosanne is leading the design of prominent commercial projects, including SkyParks 2, a major mixed-use development at Malta International Airport, and the St. John's Gardens Accommodation for The Phoenicia Malta. With expertise in concept development and project feasibility, Rosanne excels at guiding clients through their project's potential, creating thoughtful designs that bridge vision and functionality.



Danica Cachia Mifsud, Partner

Ahead of Partnership, Danica was a Design Director at AP, with her role being defined by a robust background in both architecture and structural engineering. Educated at the University of Malta in Architecture, and earning an MSc in Structural Engineering from the University of Surrey, Danica joined AP in 2008. Her first major project with the practice was the Montenegro Smokvica development, where she helped steer a large team in delivering a complex project overseas. Danica then moved onto the restoration works for the Phoenicia Hotel, and next to the multiple award-winning Farsons Brewery project, which she took from initial planning submission through to completion. Currently, she oversees the ongoing extension to St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta.

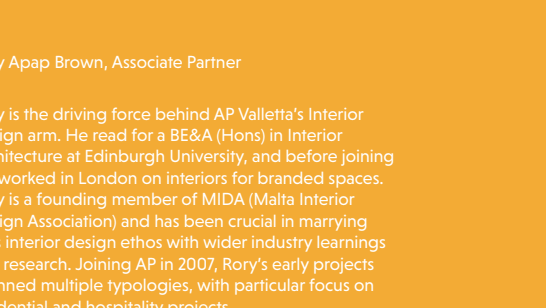
Danica brings strength and dexterity in navigating complex design and structural challenges – her problem-solving skills have been relied on for some of AP's most instrumental projects. She is a constant and trusted client liaison, and a dedicated champion of AP's sustainably driven design ethos.



Charles Sciberras, Partner

Charles joined AP in 2004, where he initially contributed to high-profile heritage-sensitive sites, including the Valletta Waterfront regeneration project and the Manoel Theatre. He studied architecture and civil engineering at the University of Malta, followed by an MSc in Structural Engineering from the University of Surrey. His early projects at AP honed his meticulous approach to work in heritage sensitive contexts and fortified his belief in the strength of collaborative design.

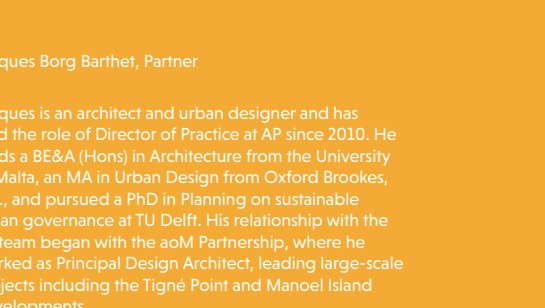
Charles was eventually appointed as a Design Director at AP, with career milestones going on to include leading the structural design of the Farsons Brewery and the award-winning Dock 1 regeneration – both highly technically challenging projects that solidified his expertise in complex builds and project implementation. Charles' biggest achievements to date have been leadership on the design for the new GO Technical Centre, where he championed sustainable design, as well as the restoration of St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral steeple a project demanding innovative structural solutions to restore a historic 67-metre high masonry tower and spire. He currently leads the structural design for AP Valletta's Skyparks 2 development.



Rory Apap Brown, Associate Partner

Rory is the driving force behind AP Valletta's Interior Design arm. He read for a BE&A (Hons) in Interior Architecture at Edinburgh University, and before joining AP, worked in London on interiors for branded spaces. Rory is a founding member of MIDA (Malta Interior Design Association) and has been crucial in marrying AP's interior design ethos with wider industry learnings and research. Joining AP in 2007, Rory's early projects spanned multiple typologies, with particular focus on residential and hospitality projects.

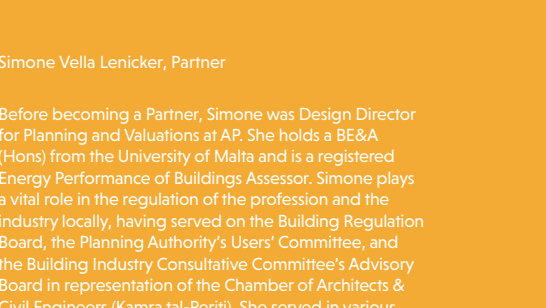
His most significant project to date was the interior design for Four Sappers Street – a mixed-use development spread across four levels of offices, two retail units, five high-end apartments, and a public piazza. Rory led the project from design to completion, overseeing design direction, coordination and implementation. Rory currently heads the National Book Centre project at AP, which involves the adaptive reuse of an abandoned palazzo in Valletta into the new home of the National Book Council.



Jacques Borg Barthet, Partner

Jacques is an architect and urban designer and has held the role of Director of Practice at AP since 2010. He holds a BE&A (Hons) in Architecture from the University of Malta, an MA in Urban Design from Oxford Brookes, U.K., and pursued a PhD in Planning on sustainable urban governance at TU Delft. His relationship with the AP team began with the aoM Partnership, where he worked as Principal Design Architect, leading large-scale projects including the Tigné Point and Manoel Island developments.

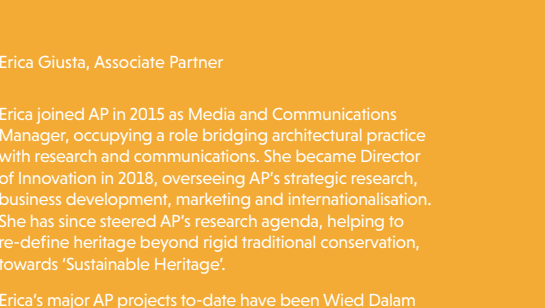
Since joining AP, Jacques has played a key role in shaping the practice's management as well as contributing to its urban projects, including the City Gate phase of the Valletta Entrance Project. He lectures and tutors at the University of Malta and has co-authored the award-winning paper, *The Urban Challenge*. Jacques is an active contributor to national planning, most recently as the co-ordinator and moderator of the APS Sustainability Forum's session on 'Urbanism', and as chair of the Kamra tal-Periti's Permanent Planning Committee.



Simone Vella Lenicker, Partner

Before becoming a Partner, Simone was Design Director for Planning and Valuations at AP. She holds a BE&A (Hons) from the University of Malta and is a registered Energy Performance of Buildings Assessor. Simone plays a vital role in the regulation of the profession and the industry locally, having served on the Building Regulation Board, the Planning Authority's Users' Committee, and the Building Industry Consultative Committee's Advisory Board in representation of the Chamber of Architects & Civil Engineers (Kamra tal-Periti). She served in various roles as a member of the Council of the Chamber for over 15 years, including as its President.

Simone's early career was shaped by her work on Malta's main hospital, Mater Dei, after which she joined AP to establish the firm's property valuations services. Her leadership has since positioned AP as a leading provider in this field, with over 400 valuations totalling €625 million in 2024 alone. Simone's involvement with the Kamra tal-Periti has informed her approach to industry evolution and regulation, a perspective she continues to integrate at AP, fostering AP's prominence in architectural practice and standards.



Erica Giusta, Associate Partner

Erica joined AP in 2015 as Media and Communications Manager, occupying a role bridging architectural practice with research and communications. She became Director of Innovation in 2018, overseeing AP's strategic research, business development, marketing and internationalisation. She has since steered AP's research agenda, helping to re-define heritage beyond rigid traditional conservation, towards 'Sustainable Heritage'.

Erica's major AP projects to-date have been Wied Dalam and San Lucjan, involving the re-imagining of industrial infrastructure of Malta's oil industry, as well as the 2024 multi-disciplinary project, Valletta Accra: A Dialogue Between Mercantile Cities, which culminated in a publication and a project proposal for the rehabilitation of a colonial building in Osu (Accra). Erica holds a MSc in Architecture for Sustainability from the Politecnico di Torino, Italy, and an MA in Media and Communication from the Il Sole24Ore Business School, Milan, Italy. She regularly contributes to the *Giornale dell'Architettura* and the *Artpaper*, and has been published in the *Routledge Sustainable Heritage Handbook*.

