

*The AP Creative  
Cluster Project*

# CREATIVE ENTERPRISE IN A CREATIVE CITY

Photography by Julian Vassallo

AP has positioned itself as part of a creative cluster in Sappers Street, Valletta. The idea of bringing together creative enterprises, working side by side, is to stimulate them as drivers for urban regeneration, innovation and branding.



The idea is to develop and grow within the context of Valletta as a creative city, after Valletta as 2018 European Capital of Culture, and based on connecting or catalysing cultural enterprises as a value chain.

### History of the building

AP Valletta has completed the renovation of its historical building. It is situated on St Michael's Bastion, which is part of the sixteenth-century enceinte and overlooks the entrance to Marsamxett Harbour. A tunnel underlying the building along its length connects Sappers Street to the fortified ditch that surrounds the town.

The original seventeenth-century fabric of the building was considerably tampered with during the nineteenth century. During the Crimean War, when Malta served as headquarters for the Allies, an unrealised project led by Florence Nightingale for a military hospital on the bastion, incorporated this building to serve as the entrance wing. In spite of this, the building is the only one in the

area to retain its original aspect, as most of the surrounding area was redeveloped in the eclectic style of the period.

### Façade

The restoration process demanded great care with respect to the delicate historic elements. The masonry structure required the replacement of several deteriorated stone blocks, to reintroduce the structural integrity of the building envelope and the visual legibility of the decorative elements.

### Office block

The six-storey building surrounds a central courtyard, a key element of the building. Bringing in natural light, the courtyard has been developed as a communal yet private area, harmonising the solid and void elements of the space. Openness and transparency mould both the working and the recreational areas. The elegant combination of materials such as wood, travertine and concrete ensure the quality and lightness of the space.





as arches or cornices using subtle techniques. The masonry structure, for example, required the replacement of several deteriorated stone blocks, to reintroduce the structural integrity of the building envelope and the visual legibility of the decorative elements.

Equipped with state-of-the-art amenities, the interiors of the residential spaces were re-designed with twenty-first century sensibilities and uses in mind. Bespoke furniture was also commissioned to populate the spaces designed by AP Valletta. ■

The ground floor is designed to be a shared space for all the tenants of the creative cluster. The kitchen and lounge area serve as a welcoming, networking space, where people can take time to relax and build relationships, promoting cooperation and cultural exchange amongst the different creative entities and their guests.

Four Sappers is an opportunity to create a unique hub entirely dedicated to the cultivation of new ideas in Valletta. The cluster is designed to be fully integrated in its urban surrounding and historical context.

**Four Sappers residences**

The renovation and extension of the dismissed building was developed as a fully-comprehensive project which thoughtfully considered the interior, exterior and landscape aspects of the site in tandem.

The six-storey building surrounds a central courtyard which comprises a key element of the building. Bringing natural light in, the courtyard was developed as a communal yet private area, harmonising the elements of solid and void. Openness and transparency characterise both the working and the recreational areas. The elegant combination of materials such as wood, travertine and concrete help ensure the quality and lightness to the space.

The colour scheme of Four Sappers, seen throughout the apartments and office spaces, was similarly designed in a timeless fashion. Creams and light colours dominate the interior, particularly in the penthouse apartment, which pays homage to Valletta's predominantly limestone cityscape. Interior interventions were minimal, with the principle aim being to highlight original features such

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**The AP Creative Cluster project won the Diploma prize in Category B (Re-habilitation and Re-use) in the 2023 Din I-Art Helwa Architectural Awards.**