

NEW PRESIDENT FOR WIRT GHAWDEX

The past year and a half has been a challenging time for many, not least for *Wirt Ghawdex*, which also suffered from the restrictions brought about by the prevailing pandemic. Notwithstanding this, the *Wirt Ghawdex* committee have persevered with the work of the organisation, particularly with the upkeep of sites in the organisation's custody and following of development applications and submission of representations to the authorities.

In its commitment to the goal of safeguarding and promoting Gozo's natural, archaeological, historical, and anthropological heritage, the organisation looks ahead to continue fulfilling its role with renewed enthusiasm. Recently, the organisation has also restructured its committee, welcoming Dr Joseph Caruana as its new president and Dr Mark Sagona as a new member on the committee.

Dr Joseph Caruana read for a joint honours B.Sc. in mathematics and physics at the University of Malta, and carried out his doctoral research in astrophysics at the University of Oxford as a Marie Curie research fellow in a network associated with the NASA/ESA James Webb Space Telescope NIRSpec instrument. At Oxford, he tutored general relativity and cosmology at his college of Christ Church. In 2012 he took up a postdoctoral research position at the *Leibniz-Institut für Astrophysik* (AIP) in Potsdam, Germany. In 2016 he joined the Department of Physics and Institute of Space Sciences & Astronomy at the University of Malta, lecturing on astrophysics & cosmology, optics, and the philosophy of science. He has authored and co-authored many publications on the early universe, and was involved in organising several international academic conferences. In 2017 he initiated a light pollution research group, leading an ongoing night sky brightness monitoring effort, with a focus on light pollution's effects upon the environment, ecology, and human health. In 2020, this work led to the publication of the first high-resolution map of the night sky brightness of the Maltese Archipelago. For many years, Joseph has been very active in science education and outreach, organising several events for the general public, and regularly lecturing on astronomy and the preservation of the Islands' Dark Sky Heritage Areas. He has served on various committees in the past, including (locally) those of the Astronomical Society of Malta and Friends of the Earth. A longtime activist campaigning for the conservation of Dwejra, its dark sky, and its marine environment, he also maintains two educational websites dedicated to these topics: www.dwejra.net and www.nightskymalta.info. He is a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and a member of the European Astronomical Society and the International Astronomical Union (IAU), with his affiliations in the latter including the Division for Education, Outreach and Heritage, and the commissions on the History of Astronomy, and World Heritage and Astronomy. (*Personal website: www.josephcaruana.net*)

Dr Mark Sagona is a visual artist and resident academic member of the Department of Art and Art History, Faculty of Arts, University of Malta, where he lectures on Art History and Fine Arts. He is a leading specialist in the Decorative Arts in Malta within their international sphere, and has lectured and published widely on the subject, also organising (with Dr Roberta Cruciata) the first conference in Malta on the Decorative Arts in 2019. Recent publications include *The decorative arts at the Addolorata Cemetery: epitomising the Revivalist and Eclectic attitudes* in *The Addolorata Cemetery* (Conrad Thake ed., 2020), and *Gothic Revival influences on Europe's border: change and resistance in Malta between decorative arts and architecture* for *The Journal* (Decorative Arts Society, London, 2021). Mark Sagona has delivered lectures at the Art College of the University of Xiamen, China, and at the Università degli Studi di Palermo. He has also recently participated (June 2021, with Prof. Conrad Thake) in the international conference *Cirice 2020 La Città Palinese* organised by the University of Naples Federico II. As a visual artist, his works have been exhibited in Malta, Rome, Brussels and Paris, and are found in various collections around the globe.