

WHEN YOU FIRST MEET DEBBIE BONELLO, IT IS IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT HER LOVE FOR ART OZES OUT OF HER EVERY PORE.

WORDS DAYNA CLARKE

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

DEBBIE BONELLO

FOR DEBBIE BONELLO, ART WAS ALWAYS A DEEPLY INGRAINED PART OF WHO SHE WAS: AS A YOUNG GIRL, AS AN EXEMPLARY ART TEACHER, AND NOW AS A MOTHER WHO HAS SEEN HER TWO SONS GROW, LEADING TO A RECENT RETURN TO THE BRUSHES, AND CREATING OUTSTANDING WORKS.

As we meet in her studio in Balzan, in central Malta, it's clear that Debbie is living her dream. A large conservatory is surrounded by beautiful gardens - truly a heavenly spot for any painter. Works adorn the walls, and a half-finished painting of Modica sits by the entrance. A beautiful Bassett Hound sleeps blissfully on a cushion in the corner; the place is the definition of tranquil. "This studio is my balt-hole," adds Debbie. "For me, it was important to have a separate art space, to come and connect with the pieces and step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life."

Debbie is originally from Mellieha, a charming coastal village on the rugged northern coast of the island. "I guess, ultimately it was growing up in Mellieha which led me to produce such seascapes." Debbie is renowned for her sweeping sea landscapes and coastal imagery. She speaks with a deep fondness for the picturesque village, opting to go back and visit family when her busy schedule allows. "The contrast of colours, the sharp coast, the alignment where the sea meets the sky to the towering church looming over the village, I do adore Mellieha."

Through painting in oils, seascapes aren't Debbie's only oeuvre, in fact, a quick browse of her collections and one will readily note absolutely any subject can be featured in one of her works, from panoramic views to intricate portraits. "It's both a blessing and a curse, in my mind absolutely anything can make a fabulous painting!" Debbie remarks. She is also not one to step away from painting en plein air, becoming one of the many artists in Malta rediscovering the delights of painting outdoors despite the challenges faced.

The notable success that Debbie has ascertained in just three years comes as a consequence of her utmost devotion to her art. There is no fast and easy route to becoming an acclaimed artist with a readily identifiable style. Hours and hours of practice and endless labour are pivotal, as are her natural talent and ability to compose such striking pieces. It's this relatively quick time-frame that has made Debbie all the more remarkable. "I was thinking to return to work after having my children, then I thought I would just try out being an artist as if I didn't do it then, I wasn't sure when I would..."





well I guess I still am trying out!" Debbie's laugh is infectious; the woman exudes positivity; it is very hard not to smile when she is around discussing her art. Her mentors have included some of Malta's most revered artists, such as Debbie Caruana Dingli, Andrew Borg and Tonio Mallia, for which she expresses her utmost gratitude.

When it comes to her hallmark style, Debbie's art is characterised by what she terms 'loose brushstrokes' which in reality are heavy, energetic, vigorous and dynamic strokes that convey an élan vital and joie de vivre. The source of her expressionistic tendencies is most likely Impressionism. "I do occasionally find it hard to know when to stop painting, and sometimes I take a break then revisit it after painting another picture." Glancing around her studio, it can be seen that Debbie often works on rotation around her pieces, flitting between one and another. What's also clear is her love for the Maltese islands. When it comes to her top location for tourists to visit? Well, Mellieha of course. ✨

Debbie's works are held in private collections, both locally and internationally. Debbie also participated in the 'Inspired in China Fine Art Exhibition by Maltese Artists, exhibition earlier this year, with works displayed in Parliament. To view Debbie's art and for further information visit www.debbiebanello.com

"This studio is my bolt-hole," adds Debbie.

"For me, it was important to have a separate art space, to come and connect with the pieces and step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life."

CREATIVE MENU WITH A UNIQUE MEDITERRANEAN TWIST

A VAST COLLECTION OF WINES AND SPIRITS, CENTRALLY LOCATED WITH HASSLE FREE PARKING



 FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

Open Everyday for Lunch & Dinner. For bookings call on 21381639 / 99499960.
ELBA RESTAURANT, COAST ROAD, BAHAR IC-CAGHAQ