

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE LAUNCH OF
“CHAMBERS OF MEMORY” BY PROFESSOR RICHARD ENGLAND, AT SAN ANTON PALACE – 15TH
OCTOBER 2018**

**It is truly an honour, and a privilege to host this evening’s
celebration.**

**I call it a celebration, because we are gathered here to pay
tribute to the remarkable, and amazing contribution, that
Richard England has made over the years, through his many
works, through his latest book, which we are launching this
evening, and through his continuous artistic endeavours.**

**Over the decades, Professor England has been a unique and
inspiring voice in the artistic community of the Maltese
Islands, and beyond.**

**His work has brought much positive visibility to our country,
and across the globe.**

“Chambers of Memory” is an evocative title for this latest book, which suitably describes the enriching journey, through layers of time and space, which the work of Professor England encourages us to pursue.

He has created a personal language, while respecting the many narratives of our past. This is evident in all of his work, from the Manikata Church, to the design of the Villa Maltija, to Dar il-Hanin Sammaritan.

However, his architectural abilities are certainly only one part to his larger contribution to art and culture.

The powerful ability of Professor England to reinterpret Maltese history into a contemporary language, in many media, is an example of a post-modern sensibility and its presence in Malta.

Richard England has described Malta's transcendence as an "Island of promise." Indeed, a small and compact place which possesses a micro-cosmic history of humankind.

Richard England has been described as an incomparable artist. Professor England sees the effects that the buildings of the Islands create, as well as, the Islands' pronounced profiles, that mark its key landmarks.

Though he has been influenced by diverse architects and artists, he has certainly established a distinctive personal style of his own, that has enriched Malta's contemporary architectural heritage.

Richard England is undoubtedly, a much-revered Maltese architect, who has enhanced the architectural values and traditions of these Islands, with his adventurous use of new techniques, fused with a revival of traditional ones.

Besides his architectural expertise, Professor England is equally an established prolific artist.

No matter how debatable the line of demarcation may be, he moves confidently and elegantly from one discipline to another in a seamless way.

Notwithstanding the changed physiognomy of the Island, particularly the density of its urban grain, the works of Professor England, represent a broad search, which elicit unusual viewpoints.

To his credit, we must also mention the academic contribution which he has dedicated to our University and beyond, particularly in ensuring that the present and future generation of architects, will embrace the necessary artistic values.

Through his masterpieces, Professor England has constantly shown an indebtedness to the inspiration of his origins and their influences.

I believe that there is a great deal of respect, but also playfulness, in the ways that Professor England engages with the cultural and architectural heritage of Malta, while not getting stuck in a literal interpretation.

We must also celebrate the strong sense of spirituality which informs all of his work.

This spiritual awareness is practically close to my own heart, because I am convinced that, without an appreciation for the Spirit of our Islands, our communities, and our Maltese society, then we cannot achieve the social and cultural wellbeing which is so essential in all of our lives.

Let me quote the words of Professor England himself, when he said: “Architects were high priests, magicians and myth-makers who surely had a wisdom which somehow, we have lost. Over many centuries, architecture in Malta was once a path to enlightenment. It has now regretfully become a road to speculation, which probably means that whilst we still have lots to learn, we perhaps have more to remember.”

These wise words reveal the importance of memory, and how necessary it is for our young architects and artists in Malta to remember where they have come from, in order to find their way in the future.

Malta should be proud to be the home-ground of Professor England and his inspiring art.

Professor England, I am very proud of you.