

## National

# Apap paintings set to exceed estimates

Four paintings by celebrated Maltese painter Willie Apap will go under the hammer at the Obelisk Auctions Gallery this weekend.

The collection belongs to the late Vincent Apap, Willie Apap's brother. They are titled *The Nativity*, *Ballerinas*, *Female Nude* and *Two Female Nudes* and will be sold at 2pm on Saturday.

Auctioneer Pierre Grech Pillow told *Times of Malta* that the pre-sale estimate was between €5,000 and €8,000 per painting – but they are expected to fetch much more.

Apap's paintings are very much in demand as it has been a while since any have been on the market.

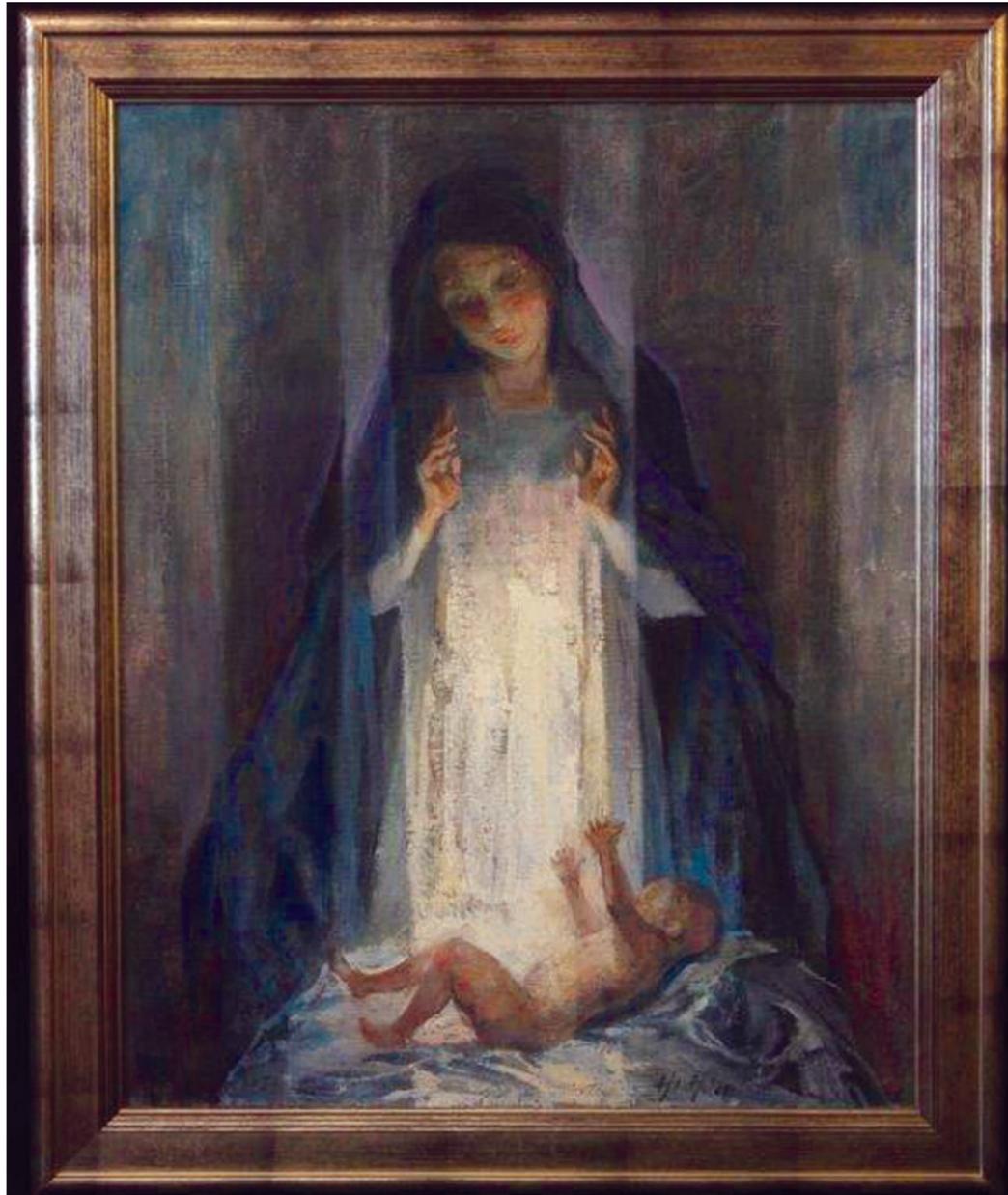
The works form part of a 700-piece "rare and unique" antiques and fine arts collection, which includes 20th century Maltese modern art, 17th and 18th century master paintings, Maltese and European furniture, silver, ceramics, glass, clocks, bronze, a collection of oriental art including ivory, soapstone and jade, jewellery, watches including Rolex, Cartier and Omega, collectors' items and other works.

Other artists include Gabriel Caruana, Emvin Cremona and George Fenech.

Willie Apap (1918-1970) divided his career between Malta and Rome, where he spent most of his life.

Since youth he showed a precocious artistic talent which developed more fully when in 1937 he travelled to the Italian capital to study painting under Carlo Siviero.

His interests embraced a variety of genres, though he is perhaps best known for his portraits and some of the most profoundly felt examples of sacred art ever produced by a Maltese artist.



Paintings by Willie Apap and, below left, other works for sale at the forthcoming auction.



## Criminals got away after police shoot-out

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using electronic codes known only to employees.

They assaulted a member of the police special assignments group, since disbanded and replaced by the rapid intervention unit, removed his pistol and tied him to two bank employees in the control room.

The police were soon on the scene after receiving a tip-off. On their arrival, a vehicle parked in front of the bank sped off with the police giving chase.

Meanwhile, someone inside the bank called for help and the police returned.

As the intruders tried to leave, a shoot-out ensued but the criminals managed to get away in a second car during the commotion.

Mr Muscat's attempted murder bears a resemblance to the murder of Joseph Galea, *il-Gilda*, who was gunned down at about 5am while seated in his car parked in front of his Marsa apartment at 5am on February 4. Mr Galea was about to drive off when his car was sprayed with bullets.

A week later, Peter Cassar, known as *Pietru l-Haqqu*, was shot twice, in the neck and chest, in his garage in Żejtun just after 2pm.

Following both shootings, the police said they were investigating a possible link between a series of murders over a span of two years and were trying to establish whether there was a connection between them.

Apart from Mr Cassar and Mr Galea, Paul Degabriele, *is-Suldat*, Joseph Cutajar, *il-Lion*, and Josef Grech, *il-Yo-Yo* had also been shot dead.

## AD: Mepa split a step backward

The consultation document on the proposed split of the planning and environment functions of Mepa is 'a step backward', according to *Alternattiva Demokratika* (AD).

The Green Party said it disagreed with the split, preferring a strengthening of the Environment Directorate under Mepa.

"The consultation document on land use planning consistently seeks to protect the interest of developers but nowhere does it protect the interests of the community," AD deputy chairman Carmel Cacopardo said.

"In most cases, the acceleration of the process to issue development permission will mean less protection of third party rights, of open spaces and scheduled properties or protected areas," he added.

AD said the consultation document barely discussed the composition of boards under the new planning authority, adding that MPs should no longer be involved in planning decisions.

# Amounts owed were never recovered

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meters in question – mainly the old models and not smart meters as in more recent cases of theft – had been tampered with and electricity was being stolen. The police were brought in and the meters were changed but no action was ever taken and the amounts owed never recovered, Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi had said.

The files were rediscovered last February inside four boxes in a back room at Enemalta's billing department.

The revelation came in the wake of another scandal involving a racket operated by Enemalta technicians who rigged as many as 1,000 of the corporation's smart meters in a way that reduced the electricity consumption recorded.

Three of six technicians charged over these cases have pleaded guilty. In all, 11 people were suspended on suspicion of being involved.

Tuesday's suspension, however, is the first involving a member of the management team.

Some of the charges and convictions secured over the tampered smart meters have been the result of a controversial amnesty offered to

consumers suspected of having paid to install the dodgy units.

The amnesties were granted on condition they pay their dues and a penalty, and disclose information about the people behind the scam.

However, the amnesty scheme was severely criticised by the Nationalist Party, which argued that the government was sending the wrong signal and condoning corruption.

The deadline the amnesty was Monday. Enemalta CEO Frederick Azzopardi said some 400 consumers came forward, of whom 60 per cent had a commercial account.