

# FOCAL POINT



Photography by - VIORICA NAUDI

ISSUE 89

The Official  
MIPP Newsletter

[www.mipp-malta.com](http://www.mipp-malta.com)



2020  
JULY | AUGUST

**SPECIAL EDITION** includes  
PART 2

## GHOSTS PAST FROM THE PAST

Who was the first known 'REAL' war photographer?

*By Kevin Casha*

# PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Dear members and friends,

Challenging times indeed! Who could have predicted how 2020 would turn out?

Images are an integral part of our everyday life... where would we be without them? Yet, most photographers have not really 'trained' themselves into improving their ability to interpret them meaningfully - a vital skill for all photographers to learn.

What does it mean to read an image, and how can we develop the skills to do so with thought and success? Visual literacy is the ability to see, to understand, and ultimately to think, create, and communicate in a graphic manner. The visually literate viewer looks at an image carefully, critically, and with an eye for the intentions of who created the image, trying to gauge purpose and meaning. Such skills can be applied equally to any type of image. All images convey information and ideas, and visual literacy allows the viewer to glean the information and ideas placed in an image and putting them in context. Naturally, this can be at times rather subjective, as we usually interpret what we see through our individual conditioning.

A way for the photographer to hone his/her visual skills is to 'feed' one's brain with relative and substantial information. Much as our body is a product of our food, the same applies to our brain. If we cram it with "useless material" how can we then expect to come out with meaningful and interesting subjects? Being discerning on what we see in our everyday lives will do wonders for our future photographs. Knowledge is power and understanding; engaging with a wide spectrum of subjects will make us identify and interpret image details and grasp messages faster and better.

This will in turn make us more capable of knowing what works and what does not in an image. The skills necessary to identify the significance of images are varied; yet careful and accurate observation is essential. Coupled with this understanding what we see and comprehending visual relationships are at least as important. Critical thinking is vital and the capacity of concentration invaluable.

One way of learning to read images better is to just pause and think when an image either catches your eye; be it because of its attraction or perhaps because of repulsion. Stopping to analyse why, for example, you like a particular image, will empower to identify what works and what does not work in a visual. Hearing constructive critique or assessments from industry standard professionals will also give invaluable guidance on what makes an image successful and what, on the other hand, fails to impress. Discussions and forums on images are just as important to build one's skills in interpretation. In a nutshell, nothing works better than looking at images IN DEPTH.

Kevin Casha

President

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*Kevin Casha*

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If you want your photographs featured on the newsletter's front page just send the images to: [courses@mipp-malta.com](mailto:courses@mipp-malta.com)  
Your contributions are always welcome



# REOPENING OF PREMISES

## IMPORTANT NOTICE REOPENING OF PREMISES:

Dear Members,

I sincerely hope that you have managed to surmount this trying period and that however you coped with your situation, you have managed to turn at least some things around in your favour and perhaps availed yourself of the extra time we all had and put it to good use. As everyone else has done we have been constantly studying the situation and we are now thinking of re-opening the premises. Nothing beats personal contact and the MIPP premises will be re-opening its doors on the 7th of July with the following session:

Tuesday 7th July: MIPP MEMBERS' MEETING  
**CREATIVITY, INNOVATION & MOTIVATION**  
by STEPHEN D'ALESSANDRO  
19:00 MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

The committee already did some 'test runs' meeting at the premises this June for committee meetings. Naturally, social distancing and other precautions were kept.

When we once again resume, you are required to come to the premises and wear a mask if you wish, disinfecting hands on entry. We shall try to keep distance between the chairs so we are keeping places on first come first served basis. We believe that keeping these precautions and using common sense will make everyone that bit safer in the circumstances.

Kindly keep an eye on our online media for any notices and/or changes on this matter. Looking very much forward to meeting you all and make up for lost time!

Kevin Casha  
President



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THE RPS

ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY

FELLOW  
FRPS

## KEVIN CASHA GAINS FELLOWSHIP OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Malta Institute of Professional Photography (MIPP) President Kevin Casha was recently awarded a Fellowship in Research (FRPS) by the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) of Great Britain. He is the only local photographer who has gained this prestigious research accolade; one the top awards of the RPS.

This distinction, which was awarded by a selection panel made up of RPS officials, was achieved through Casha's submission of his seminal research publication on

*"The History of Maltese Photography and its Protagonists."*

*A publication which deals in depth about Maltese photography since its inception in 1840 up to just before the start of digital technology.*

The FRPS Distinctions are the Society's highest level and require a distinctive distinguished and cohesive body of work in order to be considered. The category encompasses research in the arts & sciences of photography. It also looks at how photography is considered, how its history is recorded and preserved, how photography is taught and how it is understood in its own terms and as part of wider visual and artistic culture.

The RPS is based in Bristol and is the highest most respected UK body that exists to increase the knowledge and understanding of photography, to promote the highest standards of achievement in photography, and to encourage the public appreciation of photography. RPS membership is over 11,000 members in the UK and around the world. Many members join to further their photography and to embrace the challenge of working towards internationally-recognized qualifications.

The RPS <https://rps.org/> was formed way back in 1853. It is one of the world's oldest, most respected societies and enjoys Royal Patronage.



# LET'S TRY AND HELP OUR SPONSORS!

Dear Members and friends,

In these difficult times, our thoughts should go to those who are facing problems with their income due to the effects of Covid-19. We are all in some way or other effected, but some are feeling the brunt more than others and I feel we should all try and come together and help in whatever manner possible.

My second appeal and thought goes out to the MIPP's main sponsors, most of whom have employees and large bills to meet. In this dire time, why don't we all go through our images and work and try and print that travel album, that family picture etc? That way, in our own little way, we can try to help our sponsors by giving them some work, however small, in a period where they have none? This quiet period will also help us get over our backlog and things which we have been putting back. What better way than to look at our past memories and immortalise them in a photobook? Again, this appeal goes to those who can as for those who are hard up charity, naturally, begins at home.

Just to remind you of our main sponsors, (who can still be contacted online), they are the following





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# MIPP IMAGE CHALLENGE ENTRIES

Particularly during the Covid 19 period, we did our best to try and keep bringing initiatives so that our members would still feel connected and inspired. One of these initiatives was the MIPP weekly Image Challenge which gave a theme and members could enter their work and also obtain an online review.

Videos of the best work were also prepared and posted on our online media and You Tube channel. I thank Martin Agius for taking care of all the logistics needed. Here we are publishing a number of photographs entered for various themes.



Photography by Brian Agius - Rising





Photography by Deborah Muscat - Angel







Photography by Ivan Gatt - Jewish Child



Photography by Stefan Cassar - Worshipper





Photography by ROBERT CUSCHIERI





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Photography by NOEL MALLIA





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Photography by NOEL PORTELLI





# GHOSTS FROM THE PAST

Who was the first known 'REAL' war photographer?

*By Kevin Casha*



## PART 2

“ Good pictures. Tragedy and violence certainly make powerful images. It is what we get paid for. But there is a price extracted with every such frame: some of the emotion, the vulnerability, the empathy that makes us human, is lost every time the shutter is released. ”

Greg Marinovich,  
The Bang Bang Club



# GHOSTS FROM THE PAST

who was the first known 'real' war photographer??

## PART 2

The Crimean war, coinciding as it did with improving photographic technology and easier travel, attracted other important photographers. One such photographer was James Robertson, (1813-1888). Robertson, a British citizen whose family was of Scottish origin, had trained as a coin engraver at the Royal Mint in London in the 1830s.

He took up residence in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1841 where he worked as chief engraver to the Imperial Mint. Robertson was in the Crimea at the onset of the war, but little is known of his work during that first initial period. Yet, in September 1855 and again in 1856, he went back to document scenes from the war. Being in Constantinople, Robertson's proximity and access to the war zones contributed to his decision to take photographs in those areas.

His Crimean war work has a much more realistic and photojournalistic trait than that of the more celebrated Roger Fenton. Some of Robertson's work gives an insight into the real destruction of the conflict as it would have been actually experienced on the field. Unlike Fenton, who left the war zone before it ended, Robertson was present for the fall of Sebastopol in September 1855 and recorded the devastations caused by the siege. Later subsequent photographs of Robertson, which record the aftermath of the siege of Lucknow India in 1858, are quite explicit and harrowing. On the 30th September 1856, just over a year after Fenton's one day sojourn in Malta, *The Malta Times* announced Robertson's arrival on our islands:

***"We have had the pleasure of seeing some admirable specimens of photographic art, executed by Mr. Robertson, who has lately arrived in Malta from the Crimea and Constantinople and we are glad to be able to inform our readers that he has established a photographic establishment at Morelli's Apartments, 63 Strada Reale (Valletta). Mr. Robertson has on sale an extensive collection of views of the most interesting localities at the late seat of War, beside many taken at Constantinople and Greece. The portraits and costumes, some of which are coloured, are truly inimitable and we strongly recommend the admirers of this beautiful art to inspect Mr. Robertson's productions. Mr. Robertson has left the Island for England, on a visit of a few months, an assistant (most probably Felice Beato) remains in charge who will be happy to exhibit the pictures to visitors."***<sup>1</sup>

1

The Malta Times, 30 September, 1856.







13

Empress Elisabeth with her  
dog by Ludwig Angerer, 1863.

## GHOSTS PAST FROM THE PAST

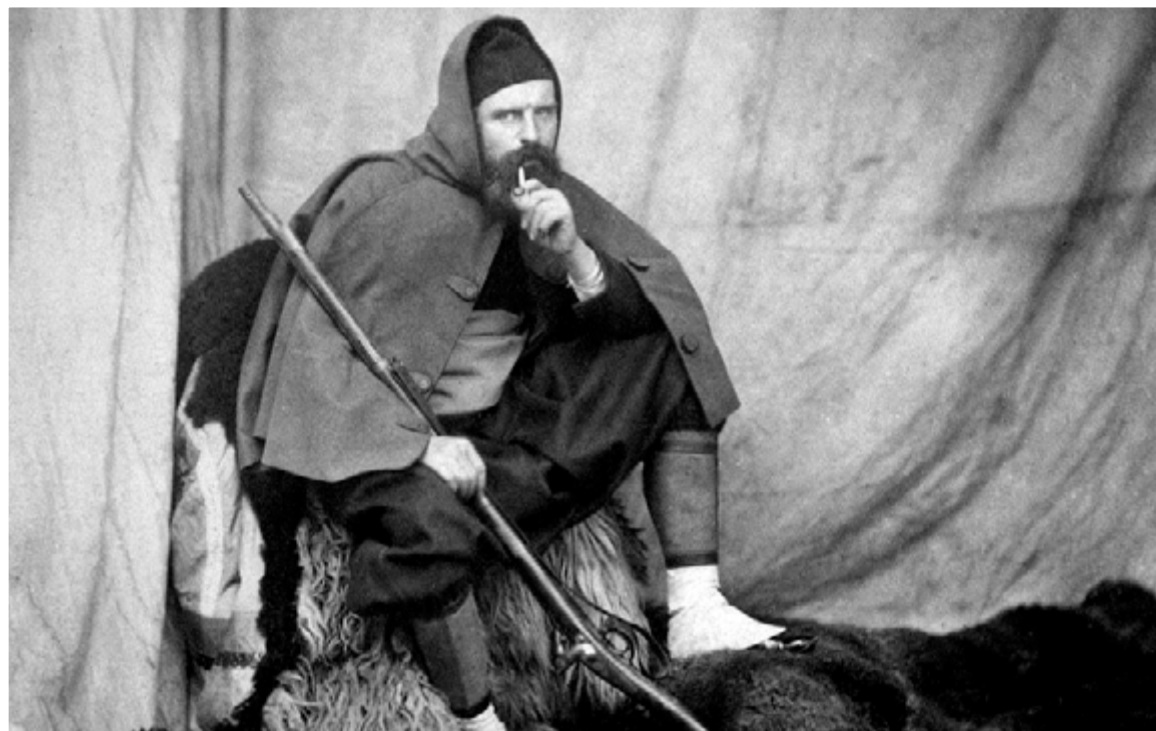
Who was the first known 'REAL' war photographer?

*By Kevin Casha*

**CHECK ISSUE 88 FOR PART ONE**



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14

Roger Fenton posing in a Zouave uniform during the Crimean War. Zouaves were crack infantry units, originally composed of Algerians. During the Crimean War, Zouaves served with the French Army, who were allies of the British. Fenton's self-portrait in the costume indicates the high regard the British felt for the Zouaves.

15



15

Personnel of the 8th Hussars preparing a meal in the field (by Richard Fenton)



Here we have a possible clue of Robertson's relationship with Felice Beato, (at times also referred to as *Felix Beato*, 1832-1909).<sup>1</sup> At that time, Robertson was en-route to London and most probably delegated Beato to run his Malta business. In fact, in April 1855, Robertson had already married Beato's sister, Maria Matilde and, for a period, Beato and Robertson became partners. It is recorded that Beato was acting as assistant to Robertson in the Crimea during April 1856. It is also highly probable that it was Robertson, older than Felice, who might have taught both Felice and his brother Antonio the basic techniques of photography. Felice Beato's later photographs similarly seem to emulate much of the polished style of Robertson and several photographs still exist signed by both photographers. A very significant one is an *albumen* silver print attributed to Robertson and Beato which was taken in Valletta c.1856.<sup>2</sup> Felice Beato's Maltese work cannot really be traced most probably due to the practice that it would have been mainly Robertson who signed the photographs, even whilst working with Beato.

Further proof of Robertson's Malta connection is on a publicity notice by Robertson in *The Malta Times* of 18<sup>th</sup> November 1856:

***"Portraits are taken daily, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m."***

The Beatos were actually born in Venice, Italy, but they were initially raised in British Corfu. Subsequently, they became British citizens. In 1851 Beato had purchased his first camera equipment in Paris thus these clues point towards a short cooperation, most likely as master and assistant, between Felice and Robertson even in Malta. Felice Beato went on to become the first known photographer to devote himself entirely to depicting Asia and the Near East. Apart from his early days in Malta, he worked in the Crimea, India, Athens, Constantinople, Palestine and Japan. He eventually settled in Yokohama, Japan and from 1863 to 1877 produced a great number of delicate, beautiful and sometimes exquisitely hand-coloured ethnographic portraits and general views of the land of the rising sun. Beato is definitely considered as one of the first true 'war' photographers. Besides the Crimean conflagration, mainly assisting Robertson, he photographed the conflict of the Opium War in China in 1860 as well as the Sudanese colonial wars of 1885. While still in business partnership with his brother-in-law James Robertson in the 1850s, Beato documented the Indian mutiny and its terrible aftermath. These photographs were the first conflict zone work done solely by Beato himself. They are signed '*Robertson & Beato*,' presumably to take advantage of the company's known trade name or due to an agreement between the two photographers. Research does point towards Robertson being the senior partner and Beato the assistant.

---

1 An application by Beato for an 1858 travel permit included information suggesting he was born in 1833 or 1834 on the island of Corfu. Earlier sources had given his birth date as 1825 or c.1825, but these dates may have been confused references to the possible birth date of his brother, Antonio. However, the actual death certificate discovered in 2009 provides the first definitive evidence of Beato's dates and places of birth and death. (Bennet, Terry; *History of Photography in China, 1842 -1860*; page 241, 2009; Bernard Quaritch).

2 The original photograph is at the John Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



16



16

Interior of the *Redan*, by James Robertson.

17



17

Russian battery in the  
Crimean War (James  
Robertson)



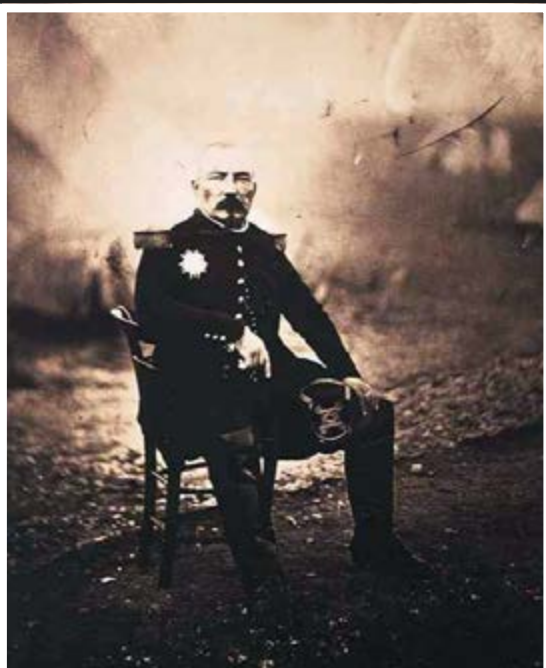
18



18

Men working in the British cemetery (James Robertson)

19



19

A field portrait of General Bosquet by James Robertson





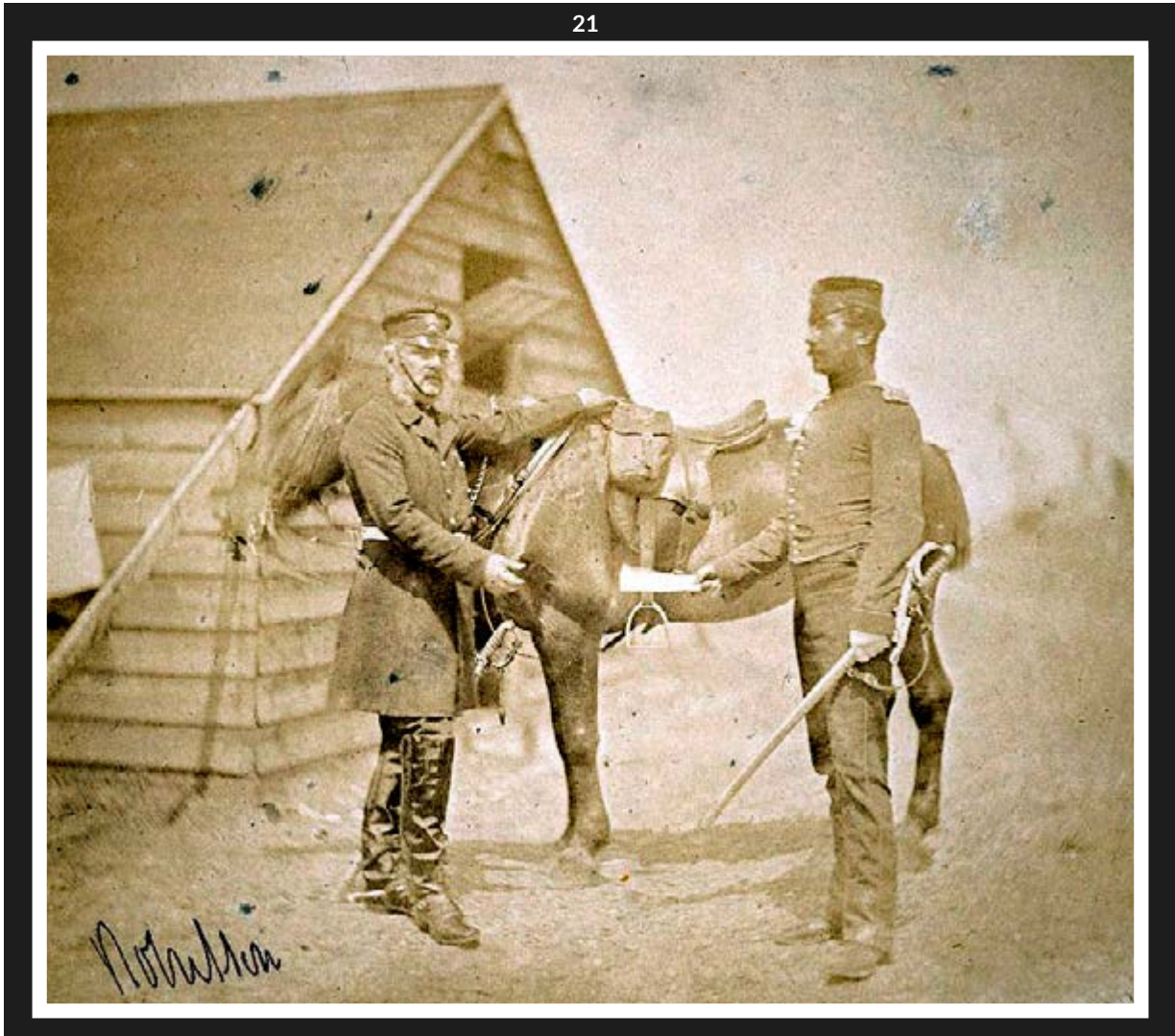
The docks, photographed by James Robertson, following an explosion during the Crimean conflict

It is fascinating to read D.F. Rennie’s account, when he encountered Beato on the field whilst the former was chronicling the attack on the *Taku* forts in China on the 21st of August, 1860:

*“I walked round the ramparts on the west side. They were thickly strewn with dead—in the north-west angle thirteen were lying in one group round a gun. Signor Beato was here in great excitement, characterising the group as “beautiful,” and begging that it might not be interfered with until perpetuated by his photographic apparatus, which was done a few minutes afterwards. Not far from this group, a tall and very dignified-looking man of between fifty and sixty, stated to be the general who had conducted the defence, was lying dead, his lower jaw shattered by a rifle bullet”.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Rennie D.F; *The British Arms in North China and Japan: Peking 1860; Kagoshima 1862*; John Murray, London, 1864; page 112.





General Lacy Walter Giles, an image prominently signed by James Robertson

Beato and Robertson were amongst the earliest photographers to work in the Holy Land. Their war photographs are believed to be the first to graphically show the real ravages of war as well as human corpses on a battlefield. Felice Beato is also known to have established, in 1863, what was most probably the first photography gallery in Japan<sup>4</sup> specializing in *“Depicting the noted places, scenery and dress of Japan.”*

The pioneer photographers mentioned here were definitely amongst the first valid known exponents of wartime photography but, perhaps with the exception of Robertson and Beato, they were nearly all ‘guilty’ of glamourising war. In fact, the first time citizens on the home front were really made aware of the actual state of carnage and destruction that war inevitably brought with it was during the American Civil War (1861-1865). Photographers such as Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner and Timothy O’Sullivan found enthusiastic audiences for their images as America’s interests were piqued by the shockingly realistic medium of photography. It was left to the Civil War photographs to conclusively strip away much of the Victorian-era romance previously associated with warfare.

<sup>4</sup> The Allinari Photographic Archive in Italy has a fabulous collection of Felice Beato’s images of Japan. Most of these are expertly hand-coloured.





The Interior of Taku North Fort by Felice Beato, immediately after it was stormed and captured.

Whatever conclusions one derives from my reflection on this subject, the pioneering war work of McCosh, Angerer, Lecchi, Szathmary, Fenton, Robertson and Beato, like that of most of their contemporaries, is ever more remarkable due to the early, rudimentary equipment with which photographers of that period went about their trade and art.

Their difficulties were extreme: they were using bulky, large view cameras and darkroom equipment, glass plate negatives and mixing chemicals on the battlefield under severe and adverse conditions. It is indeed exceptional that their prints were even produced in the first place and that they still exist to these very days.

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An early Felice Beato photograph; he ably portrayed Japan after it opened up its borders to foreigners.

*For permission requests, write to the publisher at the address below:*

*82A Triq il-Gdida Paola*

*or Email : Kevincasha@gmail.com*

## **KEVIN CASHA**

*President & Course Director Malta Institute of Professional Photography (MIPP)*

*Master SWPP; FRPS; FMIPP; FSWPP; AMPS; AMPA; Hon FMPS.*

*Master of Fine Arts in Digital Arts (University of Malta)*

*Technical Co-ordinator Malta National Picture Archive*



# RAMON CURMI



This month we are interviewing Ramon Curmi from Luqa. He is 43 years old and is married to Louise and together they have a dog P-Chan and a cat Puss Puss Shampoo. Ramon is also fond of wild plants and in fact he has seven carnivores' plants.

Photography all started when Ramon in 2009 bought his first SLR. Knowing nothing about the camera controls this SLR had, apart from Auto setting, he took a course with Kevin's Fast Track in Gozo back in 2010 and from there his adventure in photography started.

In the early days he shot at everything he came across, all of which wannabe. From fashion, journalism to landscape and music bands. Having a brother in a prominent Maltese band, the camera opened various backstage doors. But it was in 2011 where he found his first true love in photography and practised and trained until he mastered Wildlife Macro Photography, which he did for his formal certification with MIPP and passed his AMIPP back in 2013. Macro opened a new world for Ramon, an alien world most people ignore at best. The colours he found at the end of his macro lens was enough to mesmerize him for many years to come.

Ramon's passion today is Deep-Space Astrophotography.... Exploring the mysteries of the universe must have been the greatest curiosity he had since he was a kid. With his roof top observatory, he manages to photograph what is invisible to the naked eye, yet diverse in both colour and objects of the Universe we form part of.





Since he started doing Astro Photography, Ramon has been involved in the Astronomical Society of Malta where he is the Vice President of it today. He has also given talks to various crowds and audiences. Kevin Casha himself had invited Ramon to take part in the Ten Beyond Exhibition which was held in 2019, though today Ramon admits due to his continual drive for self-improvement, being self-critical of his work as well as a significant upgrade in his equipment has seen a marked improvement since the Ten Beyond days.

Ramon wishes to share with us three photos: "The 1st photo is of the Horsehead nebula. A major attraction for all Astro photographers both beginners and old timers alike, the horse head is one of those Deep space objects that easily draws the attention of anybody. Situated in the middle of the Orion Constellation, the Horse head is actually 3 different nebulae seen together from our perspective. The profile of a horse's head against the red background of the giant IC434 nebula, and to the front, the Flame Nebula. Both the Flame and IC434 are gigantic star forming Hydrogen clouds.

The Horse's head then is a dense dark cloud of debris, rock, ice and gases. To get a bit of perception of size", he says, "just the Horse's head from neck to its eyebrow, is 4 light years across. Just imagine the size of IC434 behind it. Horse head nebula forms part of the larger Orion nebular Complex, basically the whole constellation of Orion is a large web of hydrogen nebulae, with the most famous and most imposing being the Orion Nebula, which from our perspective is situated very close to the horse head and many times photographed together with a wide angle of just 200mm".



The second photo is made up of the “Surfboard Galaxy” and the Owl nebula. This is an indication of how truly diverse Astro is.... In the first photo you have a very large nebula shot with a 480mm that barely fit, while the Surfboard and the Owl were shot with a 1000 mm and still look far away and small. Reason being the Surfboard is a faraway Galaxy , 45 million light years away, while the Owl Nebula is what is called a planetary nebula, which means a dead smaller star which would have originally been about the size of our sun or up to 10 times larger. The Surfboard and the Owl rue names and M108 and M97, M stands for Messier, for the Messier catalogue, which is an old catalogue created by Charles Messier and astronomer of the 18th century who created a catalogue of 110 faint grey fuzzies in the sky which he call either nebulae of star formations. Later in years many of these fuzzies were found to be even far away galaxies visible from planet Earth. These 2 targets can be seen in Spring, which is also called the Galaxy Season, though they are largely left alone by many astronomers who most go for larger brighter, easier targets like M51, M81&82 or M101 among the famous galaxies one can see in Spring time

The third photo dates back when Ramon was at his peak in Macro photography. Here we see a spider of the species *Zygiella* after it had captured a moth which she is standing on that looks like a log. After it had wrapped it up in its silk coffin, the spider is getting ready to take it back to its lair where the moth will be drained of all its inside juices and discarded while the spider would have had a happy meal. Macro for Ramon had always been handheld at extreme magnifications, in-fact this shot stands at about 2;1 meaning the spider and its prey look twice as larger than they did in real life, and the photo is not cropped.

BY EDWARD SANT FOURNIER



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# CALENDAR

July | August



NB: DUE TO COVID PANDEMIC, ALL THOSE ATTENDING MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS ETC. ARE ADVISED TO WEAR A MASK & FOLLOW OUR RECOMMENDATIONS.



## MIPP MEMBERS'

SKYPE SESSION

IMAGE CHALLENGE REVIEW

BY MARTIN AGIUS

Friday 3rd July | 19:00

76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

July /2020

## MIPP MEMBERS'

MEETING:

CREATIVITY, INNOVATION &

MOTIVATION:

BY STEPHEN D'ALESSANDRO

Tuesday 7th July: | 19:00

76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

July /2020

## MIPP MEMBERS'

MEETING:

TABLE TOP PHOTOGRAPHY

(ATTENDEES CAN BRING THEIR OWN

SUBJECT & PHOTOGRAPH IT)

BY CHARLES CALLEJA

Tuesday 14th July: | 19:00

76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

July /2020

## MIPP MEMBERS'

PHOTOWALKS

WITH CHARLES CALLEJA

Meeting at 9am on the bridge  
at Tigne Point Sliema. Family &  
friends are welcome.

Kindly inform us if you are  
coming by email on courses@  
mipp-malta.com and keep  
Charles' mobile just in case you  
are late. +356 99 34 77 27

\*locations may be changed  
according to exigencies

Sunday 26th July: | 09:00

76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

July /2020

## MIPP MEMBERS'

MEETING:

BEING CREATIVE

WITH TRAILING LIGHTS

BY BRIAN AGIUS

Tuesday 28th July: | 19:00

76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola



July /2020

**MIPP MEMBERS'**  
MEETING:  
FRIENDSHIP IMAGE CHALLENGE  
MIPP-CROYDON – JUDGING



zoom

20.00 Malta Time

Check MIPP Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mippwall/>

or visit our website:

<http://mipp-malta.com/conventions/events/mipp-events/>

For more updates and schedules.

August /2020

**AUGUST SHUTDOWN**  
(OPENING FOR WORLD  
PHOTOGRAPHY DAY EVENT)

Sunday 23rd August

**WORLD**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY DAY**

Details to be announced.

BOOKINGS BY 15TH AUGUST ON

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Sunday 23rd August | 19:00  
76, MIPP, Britannia Street, Paola

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## NOTICE:



### MEMBERS' EMAIL UPDATES:

**SHOULD YOU NOT BE RECEIVING REGULAR EMAIL UPDATES AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MIPP, KINDLY CHECK AND INFORM US ASAP IF YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR EMAIL.**



## The Societies of Photographers

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One may pay by either sending in a cheque to: 76, MIPP, TRIQ BRITTANJA, PAOLA, PLA 1426 - Malta, together with the relative membership fee. (Cheques are to be made payable to 'The Treasurer, MIPP')

OR



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OR

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Non-Profit organizations like the Malta Institute of Professional Photography are constantly in need of funds in order to be able to function in a modern and professional manner. That is why it is important to have various sponsors interested in networking with the MIPP and at the same time involving them in important issues concerning the photographic trade.

The MIPP feels it is vital to stimulate joint events and initiatives together with our sponsors. This policy helps our members to be constantly aware of products and services that our sponsors market thus not only encouraging an increase in business but also benefitting our members through special occasional offers and deals.

This co-operation and belief by our sponsors, most of who have been with us since the MIPP's inception, has helped in no small way in making the Institute what it is today. It is one of the MIPP's main objectives to help to keep this co-operation improving. We urge our members to truly support our sponsors by making use of their services and products whenever possible.


The main sponsors of MIPP are AVANTECH (CANON); ILAB Photo, PHOTOCIANCIO (FUJI) and PHOTOIMAGES.


Our sponsors show faith in the MIPP so it is only fair that our members should reciprocate. Give your custom to the companies and entities who help us.





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