

## RACHELLE BEZZINA



Portrait of Rachelle Bezzina by Lorella Castillo

**Rachelle Bezzina performs Kirsten Palz's *Song Book Daqshekk Gwerrer* (2025), 31 October 2025, 15'**

**Rachelle Bezzina, new performance commission: *bodyobject: stool* (2025), 29 November 2025, 15', guitarists: Caldon Vella ta' Mustaèèa u Denise Cachia Vella ta' Calè**

Rachelle Bezzina's practice operates at the intersection of art, activism, and language—an embodied form of social critique that exposes the contradictions within systems of power, representation, and belonging. Working across performance, text, installation, and public intervention, her work transforms the personal into the political, probing the lived realities of gender, class, and nationhood in contemporary Malta. Bezzina's background as both artist and

activist inflects her practice with a sharp awareness of the ways in which speech—whether silenced, amplified, or manipulated—becomes a tool of both liberation and control.

Her works often navigate the tensions between visibility and erasure, confession and resistance, drawing attention to how institutional, religious, and patriarchal structures shape the conditions of expression and self-determination. Through acts of poetic defiance and linguistic play, Bezzina challenges dominant narratives of identity and nationhood, reclaiming space for multiplicity, dissent, and vulnerability.

For *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, Bezzina presents two live performances that anchor the exhibition in embodied speech and collective listening. At the Vernissage, she performs an interpretive reading of Kirsten Palz's Song Book *Daqshekk Gwerrer*, reactivating Palz's textual and sonic exploration of resistance through her own vocal and physical presence. This performative translation—part recitation, part invocation—extends Palz's work into the realm of lived experience, foregrounding the voice as both weapon and wound.

For the Finissage, Bezzina premieres the newly commissioned performance *bodyobject: stool*, reflecting on the exhibition's core themes of confession, exposure, and the politics of the body - a closing gesture that transforms articulation itself into an act of critical solidarity.

Within the framework of *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, Bezzina's practice resonates with the exhibition's exploration of voice, intimacy, and complicity. Her work interrogates who gets to speak, who is silenced, and how confession—whether religious, judicial, or digital—functions as a mechanism of both empowerment and surveillance. In the Maltese context, where questions of gender equality, bodily autonomy, and freedom of expression remain urgent, her art situates itself as both witness and catalyst. Through the language of the body and the gesture of articulation, Bezzina insists on the right not only to speak, but to speak otherwise—to transform testimony into resistance, and silence into a form of collective critique.

## **ARTIST STATEMENT:**

*bodyobject: stool* forms part of my ongoing inquiry into the relationship between the body and the objects that quietly govern our behaviours, gestures, and positions in the world. For *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, this work takes on a particular resonance within Malta's layered histories of occupation, surveillance, and spectacle. The stool — an ordinary, utilitarian object — becomes a site where power, vulnerability, and endurance are negotiated through the body.

In a context where geopolitics often reduces people to images, statistics, or distant narratives, the performance reintroduces the physical body as something real, weighty, and present. The work looks at how bodies inhabit structures not of their own making, and how everyday objects — as extensions of larger systems — shape our movements, our rest, and our labour. By placing the performer and the stool in a state of mutual dependence, the performance quietly reflects on how individuals navigate the pressures of power, exposure, and control.

The live soundscape is created by a father-and-daughter guitarist duo, using traditional Maltese folk instrumentation. Their presence anchors the performance within a local sonic lineage,

evoking intergenerational memory and the inheritance of both resilience and silence. This Maltese musical vocabulary creates a counterpoint to the exhibition's broader discourse on global spectacle: an intimate human scale set against the overwhelming theatre of geopolitics.

*bodyobject: stool* becomes a small act of resistance — an insistence on slowness, on grounding, on embodied presence — within a world saturated by images of war, crisis, and political performance.

For *Art From Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, *bodyobject: stool* foregrounds a number of issues addressed within the exhibition:

*Embodiment vs. Political Spectacle* - While geopolitics becomes an obscene performance on screens, the work re-centres the real, vulnerable body. It offers a counterpoint to spectacle through slowness, weight, breath, and presence.

*The Politics of Everyday Objects* - The stool represents the mundane structures that quietly dictate human posture, labour, submission, and rest. It mirrors how political systems shape bodies in ways so familiar we stop noticing them.

*Malta's Colonial & Militarised Histories* - A stool can be a waiting site, a place of interrogation, labour, or observation. In Malta, these meanings echo colonial administration, military routines, dockyard labour, and religious discipline.

*Exposure, Surveillance & Vulnerability* - Sitting is an exposed position — stationary, visible, unable to flee. The performance stages the body in a controlled, observed position, resonating with the exhibition's themes of surveillance and forced visibility.

*Resistance Through Micro-Gestures* - Small shifts and negotiations with the stool reflect how people resist, adapt, and survive within oppressive or absurd systems, mirroring the macro theatre of geopolitics.

*Soundscape as Cultural Counterpoint* - The traditional Maltese folk guitar brings lineage and intergenerational memory into the space, countering the global noise of media spectacle.

*Performance as "Looking Sideways"* - Instead of participating in the obscene spectacle, the work invites viewers to look slower and deeper, in line with the exhibition's question: How can we look away so as to see the world anew?

*Body-Object as Power & Control* - The dynamic between performer and stool mirrors relationships between citizen and state, subject and system, body and institution.

*Presence Against Desensitization* - In a world saturated by crisis imagery, the performance insists on physical presence and the human scale.

*A Maltese Body in a Maltese Institution* - A Maltese performer activating the space directly answers the desire for local, site-specific engagement. The performance becomes part of Malta's ongoing negotiation with its own geopolitical identity.

- Rachele Bezzina

**ARTIST BIO:** <https://sites.google.com/rachelledeguara.com/rachelle-deguara/work>

**RACHELLE BEZZINA (born 1997 in Malta. Lives and works in Malta.)**

Rachelle Bezzina is a multidisciplinary artist and performer whose work traverses live art, music, and socially engaged practice. Through performance, voice, and text, she explores the intersections between collective memory, feminist resistance, and the body as an archive of political experience. Drawing from folk and hip-hop traditions, Bezzina's practice fuses ritual, protest, and storytelling to confront the entanglements of gender, power, and postcolonial realities in Malta.

Rachelle Bezzina's recent projects include Harvest – Abundance – Preservation (Boomerang Festival, 2025), Nisa, Jghannu (Ritmu Festival, 2025), and The Heart Ticks Soft and Mild (Mamo Tower, 2025). She has presented work at Spazju Kreattiv (Il-Kazin tal-Partit Karma Demokratika, 2024; Shifting Context, 2022), R Gallery (Dig Deep, 2024 and Inheritance, a residency for R Open 2025), the Gabriel Caruana Foundation (No Time to Spare, 2023), MUŻA (2bec1, 2023), and Rosa Kwir (Xewka f'Qalbi Xewka f'Sormi, 2023).

As the lyricist and frontwoman of the punk-hip hop band BRUDA, Bezzina extends her performative practice into music, using the stage as a site of rebellion and catharsis. Her work often merges curatorial practice with live experimentation, reflecting a commitment to care, collectivity, and artistic risk.

Beyond her artistic work, Bezzina is the President of the feminist NGO Young Progressive Beings, which she co-founded in 2019. She also ran as a candidate in the 2024 European Parliament elections with the Green Party (ADPD), advocating for cultural equity and feminist politics. A graduate of MCAST's Bachelor's in Performing Arts, she is an alumna of the Salzburg Global Seminar for Young Cultural Innovators and a former intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.