

Sinfo

November-December

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS

Young people are changing
Slovenia – for the better

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

www.slovenia.si
www.ukom.gov.si

Published by
Government Communication Office

Editor-in-Chief
Petra Ložar

Executive Editor
Vesna Žarkovič

Editorial Board
Tanja Glogovčan, Danila Golob, Uroš Mahkovec, Polona Prešeren, Livija Kovač Kostantinovič

Design
Irena Kogoj

Photo Editor
Foto format d.o.o.

Photo on the front page
Mostphotos

Translation
Secretariat-General of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and Interpretation Division, DZTPS

Language editing
Amidas

Copy writer editing
Marcus Ferrar

Print
Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia

Number of copies
3500

ISSN
1854-0805



Photo: Mateja Jordovič Potocnik

SLOVENIA'S YOUTH: HIGHLY EDUCATED, APOLITICAL AND LEARNING GRANDMOTHER'S COOKING

How can we describe Slovenian youth today? Perhaps as "the generation with little pay, forced to stay in their parents' oversized houses because they cannot afford costly apartments, and as a cheap labour force generation"? Today, the youth population of Slovenia does not live better than their parents, and rather than focus on major social issues, they concern themselves with individual, personal matters. They are not very interested in politics and put family, health, personal relationships, their private world and security ahead of their careers.

Ranking below the European average in terms of voter turnout, they are at the very top when it comes to education, which is why even young people with a diploma can face unemployment. After a period of being somewhat neglected, secondary school-level vocational education is being re-introduced in the school system. Young Slovenians are surpassing their European counterparts when it comes to practising compassion towards the most vulnerable members of society and those who need help the most. Since the future rests in the hands of the young, the latter have become the Government's priority, which is why its main tasks include the creation of new jobs, encouraging youth creativity, social entrepreneurship and affordable housing.

Do you recall the recipes of your great-grandmothers or old village cooks, or the tastes of your childhood? Do you know why some dishes were only prepared on festive days and why others were eaten daily? Can you prepare a delicious meal using only locally produced and seasonal ingredients, perhaps even gathered around your house? Children at some of the Slovenian primary schools undertook a challenge of preparing the dishes of their ancestors, but with a modern twist. By exploring their food-related legacy, these children aim to raise awareness not only amongst their own generation and their parents, but, through media, also among the entire Slovenian and foreign audience, thus contributing to the *Traditional Slovenian Breakfast* project organised within the *Bon Appetit*, Slovenia campaign.

As we are approaching the end of the year, we would like to thank you for reading our magazine and wish you a Happy New Year!

Vesna Žarkovič, Executive Editor

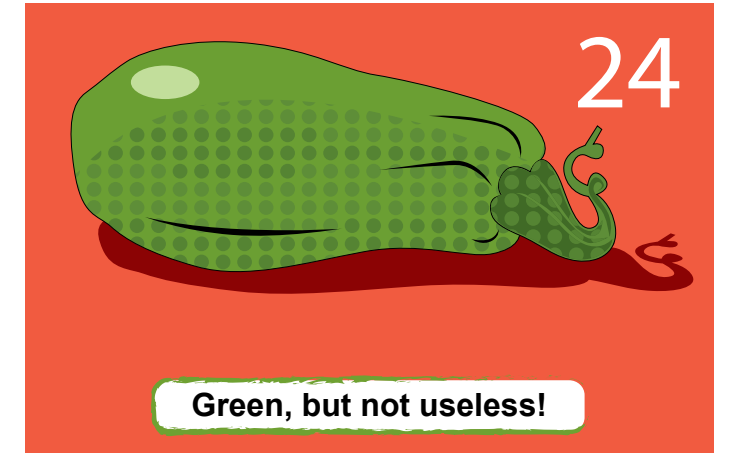
- 8 HOW YOUNG PEOPLE SEE SLOVENIA'S FUTURE
Slovenia is like a giraffe, It takes up a small area but has a high reach
- 12 TADEJ SLAPNIK, STATE SECRETARY AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
Young people – the Government's priority
- 22 PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION
"I Feel Slovenia. I Feel 25."
- 24 GENERATIONS LIVING TOGETHER
Fruits of Society project furthers bonds between young and old
- 34 THE YOUNG ARE CHANGING THE KOČEVJE REGION FOR THE BETTER
Friendlier public spaces, and home-grown food on the doorstep
- 38 SLOVENIA IN THE WORLD TRAVEL MARKET
Nature, infrastructure, action, sports
- 46 SLOVENE AT FOREIGN UNIVERITIES
World Festival of Slovene Culture
- 48 MONTH OF DESIGN
"Creative tourism" in green Slovenia
- 56 12TH SLOVENIAN BIENNIAL OF ILLUSTRATION
"The image of the book, the book of images"
- 64 SLOVENIA'S FLOURISHING ARTS & CRAFTS
Skilled hands and a creative spirit
- 74 SLOVENIAN CHILDREN COOK LIKE THEIR GREAT-GRAND-MOTHERS
Culinary tradition as part of cultural heritage



12



22



24

Green, but not useless!



34



38



48



56



64



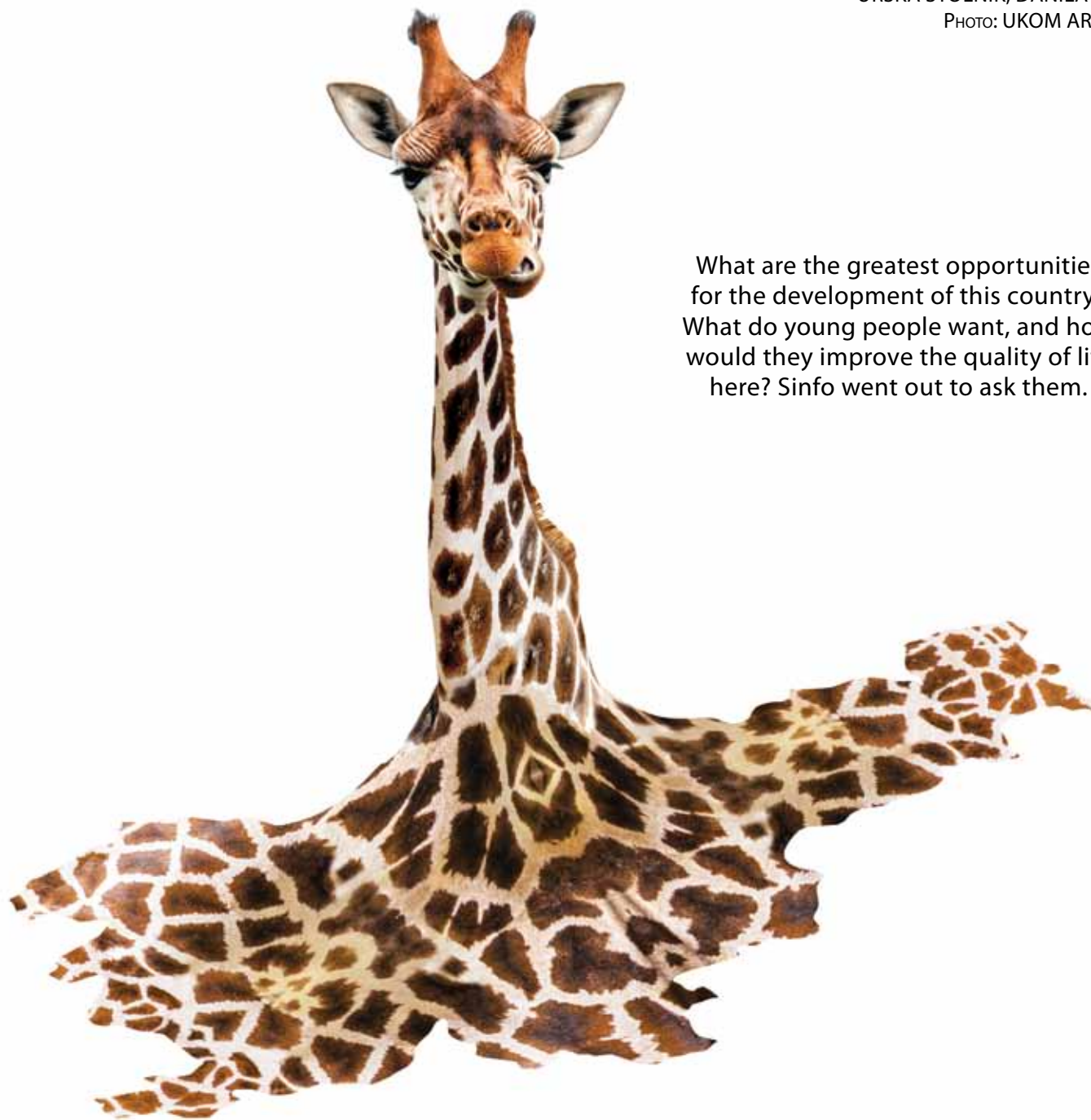
74



HOW YOUNG PEOPLE SEE SLOVENIA'S FUTURE

Slovenia is like a giraffe It takes up a small area but has a high reach

URŠKA STOLNIK, DANILA GOLOB
PHOTO: UKOM ARCHIVES



What are the greatest opportunities for the development of this country? What do young people want, and how would they improve the quality of life here? Sinfo went out to ask them.



Sara Kališnik Verovšek: Slovenians should be aware that our country is good as it is now. We have health insurance and access to education. We should not take these things for granted.



Katja Berk Bevc: Slovenia is young. It is still finding its way, but has a lot of potential.



Maša Urbančič: Slovenia's accession to the EU has opened up many opportunities for me. I think that previously these opportunities did not exist.



Maja Čeček: Twenty-five years ago we set off on a path of independence, and I believe it was a decision that took a lot of courage. The challenge for Slovenia lies in how the country will take care of its young people and other unemployed persons, and how it will help the elderly lead more active lives.



Luka Mejač: Globally, Slovenia is best-known for its hard-working people, picturesque natural beauty and world-class athletes.



Tjaša Valič: Slovenia is a small and very beautiful country of friendly people and breath-taking scenery. It is still finding its way, but has a lot of potential.



Katja Perat: The only time Slovenians show solidarity is when things go so wrong that we can no longer ignore them.

Nina Delakorda: We need to be more optimistic and raise our awareness that we are a nation of well-educated people with a wide range of skills and knowledge. Actually, we are one of the few countries where people can speak so many foreign languages.



Domen Vavpotič: Slovenia is a peaceful and sparsely populated country which has attained a high level of economic, educational and scientific development.

Gal Jakič: Slovenia needs energy and audacity in order to face the challenges of the modern era. We need to learn how to play to our strengths. By doing so, we will show the world what makes us special and why we deserve our state.



Gregor Oberčkal: Slovenia has a wealth of natural resources. It is rich in forests and has abundant drinking water. These natural resources need to be protected.



Klara Bašelj: The pride of Slovenia is its culture.

Sara Poropatič: I like living in Slovenia because it gives me access to free education.



Klemen Pogračič: Slovenia is like a giraffe. It takes up a small area but has a high reach.

Tjaša Sušin: If I could do magic, I would change the way people think. We are often pessimistic. If we took a more positive approach, we would be able to do many things better and co-operate more effortlessly.



Nuša Markelj: They say we are workaholics. I wonder how this is possible, given that there is a shortage of jobs.

TADEJ SLAPNIK, STATE SECRETARY AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Young people – the Government's priority

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Creating new jobs for young people, stimulating their creativity, social entrepreneurship and accessible housing for young people are the priorities of the Government and Tadej Slapnik, State Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. A lot has been done, he emphasises, but plenty of tasks remain yet to be accomplished.

During the economic crisis, young people between 15 and 29 years of age became one of the most vulnerable population groups, as the tight situation on the labour market made it difficult for them to obtain their first employment and much needed work experience necessary for future positions higher up. How can we create new jobs?

The main focus of the Government's strategic project, on which I have been working, is to promote social entrepreneurship, whose central objective is the development of new jobs.

In 10 years' time, we would like to catch up with the European average, which would mean an increase from 1% to 6.5%; to expand, that would mean approximately 50,000 new jobs in the social economy sector.

We carry out programmes and encourage the development of start-up companies, networks of support environment, mentoring programmes and social enterprises. Here, we see a great opportunity for young unemployed people who show great interest in social entrepreneurship. Besides this, we have also been tackling unemployment among young people with the Youth Guarantee programme, which is now well-established. Over the last couple of years, we have provided 50,000 new jobs for young people in Slovenia through this programme.

What does this mean?

This means that almost all the ministries and the Government are integrated through a broad and comprehensive programme, which guarantees young people that four months after they fin-

ish their education or become unemployed, they receive a quality offer for employment, further education, an apprenticeship or an internship. In July, we put out a call for applications, through which we provided, as the first EU country, grants in the total amount of EUR 500,000 for start-up phases of youth cooperatives. Young people who established youth cooperatives with a goal to join their knowledge, skills and services and appear on the market together, applied for the funds. With this measure, we will make grants available to 25 youth cooperatives in Slovenia, each receiving EUR 20,000 for the start-up phase.

Thus, Slovenia is among the first European countries to implement such a youth cooperative measure aimed at providing employment for young people.

We also keep track of initiatives enabling young people to successfully develop their business ideas and provide themselves sustainable employment. We have also adopted more than 30 measures that provide an easier transition from education to employment. The Youth Guarantee scheme combines measures of various government sectors that are aimed at enhancing young people's employability and their entering the labour market. The main goals include: facilitating the transition from education to employment, quicker activation of young unemployed people and reduction of unemployment. The action plan encompasses 36 measures that cover the period of education and the first months after entry into the employment record.

This is probably not possible without a great deal of creativity, which is the second part of your plan to assist young people. Yes, that is true, creativity is very important nowadays. In Slovenia,

we have an excellent example: a youth technology and research entrepreneurial centre Zavod 404 (Institute 404), which helps young people discover their creative potentials through creating new products in clubs at one third of secondary schools across Slovenia. Young people set themselves goals to manufacture machines or devices that are not yet available on the market, which they actually manufacture on their own through various programmes with the assistance of qualified mentors.

Can you list a few?

They have made quite a few incredible innovations, such as a remotely controlled zeppelin, an electric bicycle and a rocket that they sent into the stratosphere. At the moment, they are preparing a remotely controlled vessel that will cross the Atlantic for the NASA competition. These are truly ambitious projects. This year, with a goal to expand these activities to institutions of public education, the state supported three pilot educational maker labs that will be developed in three secondary-school centres in Slovenia. Each of them will receive a grant in the amount of between EUR 600,000–700,000 for high-quality workshop equipment, development of skills and linking with companies. In the first half of 2017, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology will provide a further EUR 2 million for the establishment of 10 maker labs across all Slovenian regions. The state will also support the organisation of the international Makers fair event, which will be organised on May 13 by Slovenian maker labs for the first time. I am convinced that the event will prove that the maker movement is expanding among young people in Slovenia, as creative makers from Slovenia and worldwide will attend.

Housing for young people also represents a big problem in Slovenia. Young people have difficulties finding an adequate place to live and end up living with their parents for too long. As a solution to this problem, you offer housing cooperatives, which are a well-established form of providing housing in some other countries. Can you tell us more about this?

That is true, in recent years they have also become better-known in Slovenia and they now have the potential to become an important part of housing policy. Their operation is based on the provision of high-quality and affordable housing through partnership between the state, municipalities and civil society. Otherwise, this is a widespread and serious problem in Slovenia, as we are at the bottom among EU countries in terms of how long young people remain living with their parents. Also, the problem is that 90% of

all housing units are privately owned, that our houses are too big and that our housing policy governing the availability of rental dwellings is inadequate. In other European countries, approximately 55% of housing units are privately owned, which means that more rental dwellings are available.

In Slovenia, young people also find it more difficult to obtain housing loans; for this reason, we developed a project to promote cooperatives or housing cooperatives. The first meeting of stakeholders took place at the Faculty of Architecture.

Young people in Slovenia established the first youth housing cooperative: Zadrugator.

Yes, I am really glad to have seen it happen.

They have acquired a lot of knowledge in this field and the Government has now been setting conditions for the systemic support of the development of housing cooperatives in Slovenia within the strategic project.

In October, the second conference was held in Ljubljana on the topic of housing cooperatives that can provide rental and affordable housing primarily for young people. International experts presented their experiences in the field of housing cooperatives. At the conference, on behalf of the Government, I presented a pilot project aimed at creating a model for establishing housing cooperatives for young people in Slovenia. Young members of the Zadrugator housing cooperative, representatives of the national and the Ljubljana housing funds, experts from the Mreža za prostor network and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning are all involved in the implementation of the pilot project. In cooperation with the state, representatives of young people have identified three potential locations in Ljubljana. The goal is that, in the initial (pilot) phase, 20–30 young people renovate an existing building or build a new building. The state will support the measure by providing repayable funding. For setting up the financial instrument that will be implemented by the national Housing Fund, the Government will provide EUR 5 million of repayable funds from the European Cohesion Policy. These funds will also be available to youth housing cooperatives in city municipalities.

According to our estimates, this measure will allow 300–400 rental housing units to be made available to young people next year. If the interest for such housing increases, we plan to increase the amount of repayable funding for the construction of rental cooperative housing.

Where can information on this topic be found?

All relevant information will be available to young people online on the Government, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning

and the participating local communities' websites. A special cooperative housing group will be established within the Government's strategic project. It will be led by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and will include representatives of young people, the Housing Fund, the Ministry and all other interested parties. Thus, we wish to set up this model, fund its development and considerably increase the availability of housing. The housing cooperative will put out a public call intended for young people who wish to participate.



Symbols of Slovenia as we feel and see them

In the year marking the 25th anniversary of Slovenian independence, the Government Communication Office, together with Instagram and Facebook users, created a photo gallery presenting the development of our homeland. [#Slovenija25](#). The photos show Slovenian images and symbols which citizens captured with their cameras, as most representative of Slovenia.

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Photo: Rozle Bregar

The images include a stork in the middle of a field of hay in foggy Bela Krajina, the Prime Minister discussing the fight against corruption in sports during the ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the Slovenian Olympic Committee, the always elegant President of the Republic of Slovenia, the opening of new premises of the Slovenian embassy in Sarajevo, numerous natural attractions, tanks which bore witness to the 10-day war in Slovenia, and the I Feel Slovenia. I Feel 25. exhibition in Riga. Some others chose to capture the Slovenian tricolour flag without a star and coat of arms

raised at the top of Mount Triglav, which is by tradition sacred for Slovenians, a tractor loaded with potatoes harvested in the Prekmurje lowlands, rafting on the Kolpa River, the wonderful Lake Bled, Slovenian Olympic athletes, the Planica ski jump hill, the Julian Alps, and so on ...

There are, of course, plenty of other motifs and symbols in Slovenia; we are thankful to everyone who captured these striking images on camera.



Photo: Sebastijan Sitar



Photo: Joco Žnidaršič



Photo: Nastasija Hahonina



Photo: Leandro Rossano Sukich



Photo: Jan Kocjan



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/ST



Photo: Rok B.

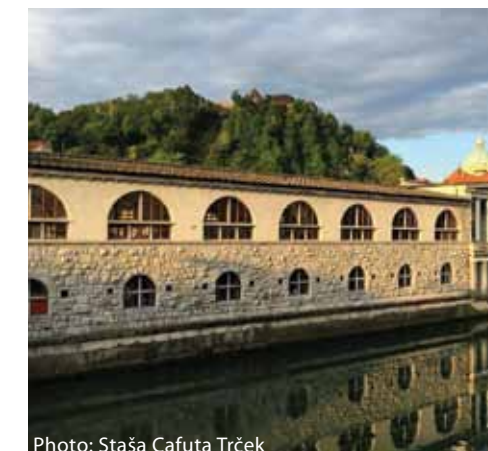


Photo: Staša Cafuta Trček



Photo: Urša Nered



Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Photo: Veronika Kravos

THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF SLOVENIAN YOUTH

Above-average education

Youth around the world is an important driving force in development, innovation and positive social change. However, many factors prevent effective utilisation of youth's potential, since its value is still not fully recognised.

URŠKA STOLNIK, IRENA KOGOJ



AVERAGE EDUCATION LEVEL

secondary education prevails
7% of females and 12% of males have an elementary or lesser level of education
as a rule, females complete their studies earlier than males
20% of males and 37% of females have a tertiary level of education

EMPLOYMENT

in the category of young people aged 25, 45 % are employed (of which 8 % are self-employed)

NET SALARY

the average net salary of the employed aged 25 is EUR 792

MARITAL STATUS

12.8% of 25-year-old females 5.4% of 25-year-old males are married
3.8% of 25-year-old males and 8.9% of 25-year-old females live in non-marital partnership

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

78% of 25-year-old women have not given birth yet
15% have given birth to one child
5% have given birth to two children

The number of young people

According to the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, as well as the European Commission people aged 15–29 are considered young. Compared to the situation before independence, there are generally fewer young people in Slovenia today. Their share in the total population was 24.1% before independence compared to 17.2% today. The majority of young people live in the Central Slovenia statistical region, which is largely the result of concentration of the student population.



Share of young people

24,1 %

1991

17,2 %

2014

Education

In 2014, one out of six young people had at least higher vocational education. In 1991, only one out of seventeen had this level of education, which means that 16.7% of young people had at least higher vocational education in 2014, while the percentage was only 6% in 1991.



Higher level of education

6 %

1991

16,7 %

2014

In 1991, 47.5% of secondary education students and 43.8% of higher vocational and higher education students received scholarships, while in 2014, the percentage was slightly lower (45.3% of secondary education students and 26.9% of higher vocational and higher education students). The majority of scholarship holders received state scholarships. In 1991, the share of state scholarships was 56%, while in 2014 it was 78%.



Scholarship holders

47,5 % of secondary education students

1991

43,8 % of higher vocational and higher education students

1991

45,3 % of secondary education students

2014

26,9 % of higher vocational and higher education students

2014

Marital status

Since Slovenia gained its independence, the number of marriages among young people has dropped considerably. A less drastic drop (by a fifth) in marriages was recorded in the general population. Among young people, the number of grooms has decreased by two thirds, while the number of brides has decreased by more than half. More precisely 78.6% of grooms and 88.2% of brides were part of the younger population in 1988. In 2014, however, there were only 35.6% of grooms and 51% of brides in this age group.

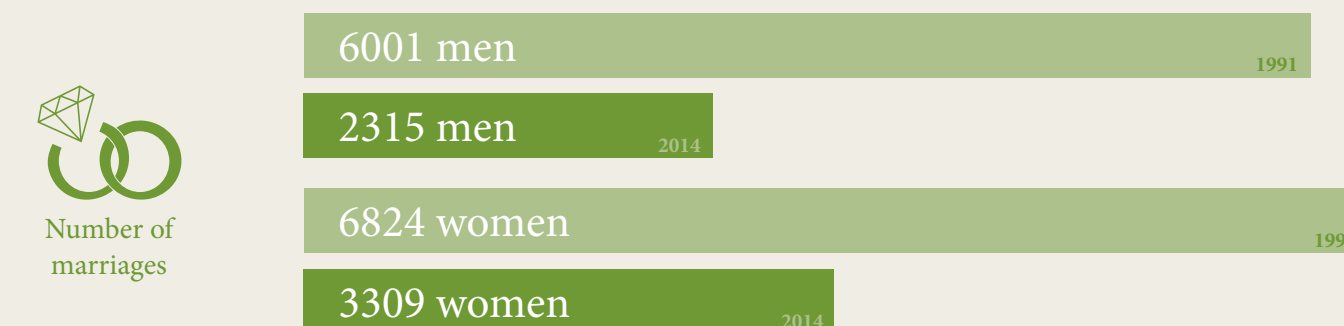


People's age at marriage is also increasing. In 1988, for instance, the average age of grooms and brides was 27.3 and 24.4 years, respectively. In 2014, grooms and brides were 7 years older on average. The average age of grooms and brides in 2014 already exceeded 30 years (34.5 years for grooms and 31.8 years for brides).



Nevertheless, the majority of grooms and brides are up to 29 years old. In 1991, the majority of grooms were 25–29 years old (3,254), while the majority of brides were between 20–24 years of age (3,987). Thus, in 2014, most grooms and brides were in the age group of 25–29 years.

In 1991, 6001 men and 682 women in the age group of 15–29 years married for the first time, while the figures for 2014 were 2315 and 3309, respectively.



Starting a family

In 1991, young mothers (under the age of 30) gave birth to 17.143 children, while in 2014, 9.640 children were born to young mothers. In other words: 59 children per 1,000 young women were born in 2014 and 77 in 1991.



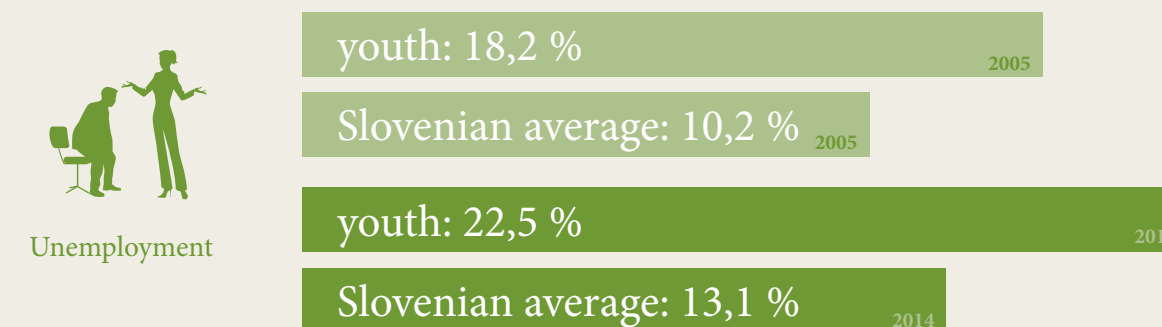
In 2014, the average age of mothers at the birth of their first child was 29.1, while in 1991, the year in which Slovenia gained its independence, they were exactly five years younger at first birth (24.1 years) and 30 years ago (in 1984) they were 6 years younger. Women increasingly decide to have their first, second or third child after they turn 30.



Employment

The number of employed and self-employed young people declined when compared to 19 years ago, while the share of the self-employed has increased. In December 1995, the total number of employed young people was 193,112 and of these, 4% were self-employed. In December 2014, there were 105,711 employed young people in total, 8% of which were self-employed.

Compared to the situation a decade ago, the registered unemployment rate among the young in 2014 was 4.3 percentage points higher (22.5% in 2014 and 18.2% in 2005). Like ten years ago, the registered unemployment rate among the young exceeds the Slovenian average, which was 10.2% in 2005 and 13.1% in 2014.



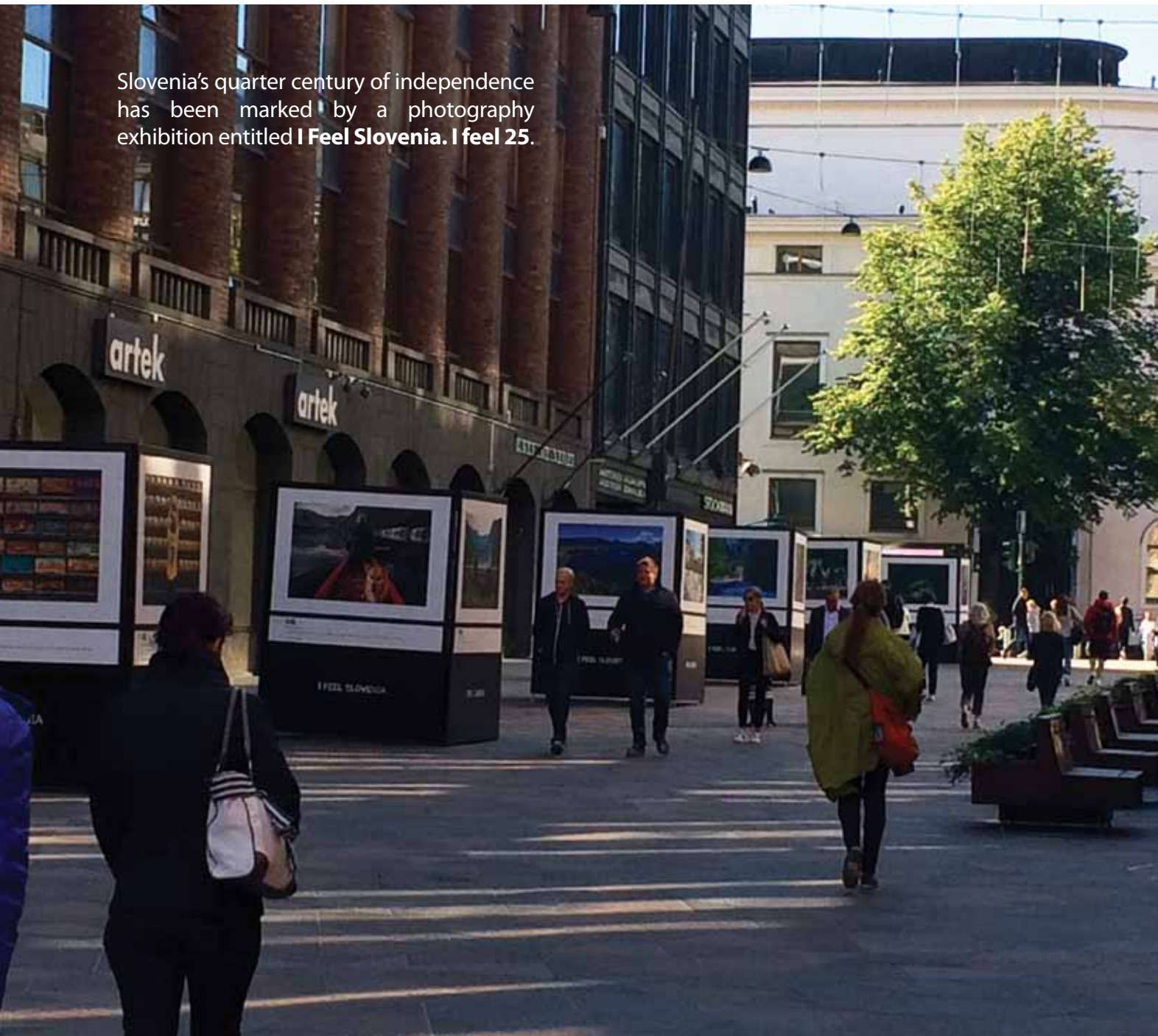
SOURCE: WWW.SLOVENIA25.SI
DATA SOURCE: STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

“I Feel Slovenia. I Feel 25.”

DANILO GOLOB, PETRA LOŽAR
PHOTO: UKOM ARCHIVES

Slovenia's quarter century of independence has been marked by a photography exhibition entitled **I Feel Slovenia. I feel 25.**



On its tour of several European cities the exhibition showed 38 photographs which depict Slovenia as it has become – a green, active, boutique country committed to sustainable development. The story is told through photographs taken by renowned Slovenian photographers, selected by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia. The exhibition highlighted Slovenia's natural, cultural and social attractions, the well-known and lesser-known jewels of its diverse landscape, and the human activities within it.

Slovenia is a country of outstanding achievements.

It boasts the world's oldest wheel with an axle, one of the world's highest levels of biodiversity, the largest underground canyon in the world, the largest intermittent lake in Europe, and the largest proportion of the national territory designated as Natura 2000 areas. It is located at a complex linguistic crossroads and it is one of the wealthiest countries in Europe with regard to the amount of water per capita. The photographs capture images of Slovenia's nature, cultural heritage, architectural gems, and the life of its people. The exhibition started its European tour in Berlin in June and continued in Vienna, Geneva, Helsinki, and Tallinn. Its journey ended in Riga at the end of September.

Between 9 and 26 June the exhibition was on display at Plaza Vaticano in Buenos Aires as part of the Month of Slovenia events hosted by the city.

The exhibition was organised by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia in cooperation with the Embassies of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia Press Photo, and the Slovenian Army.

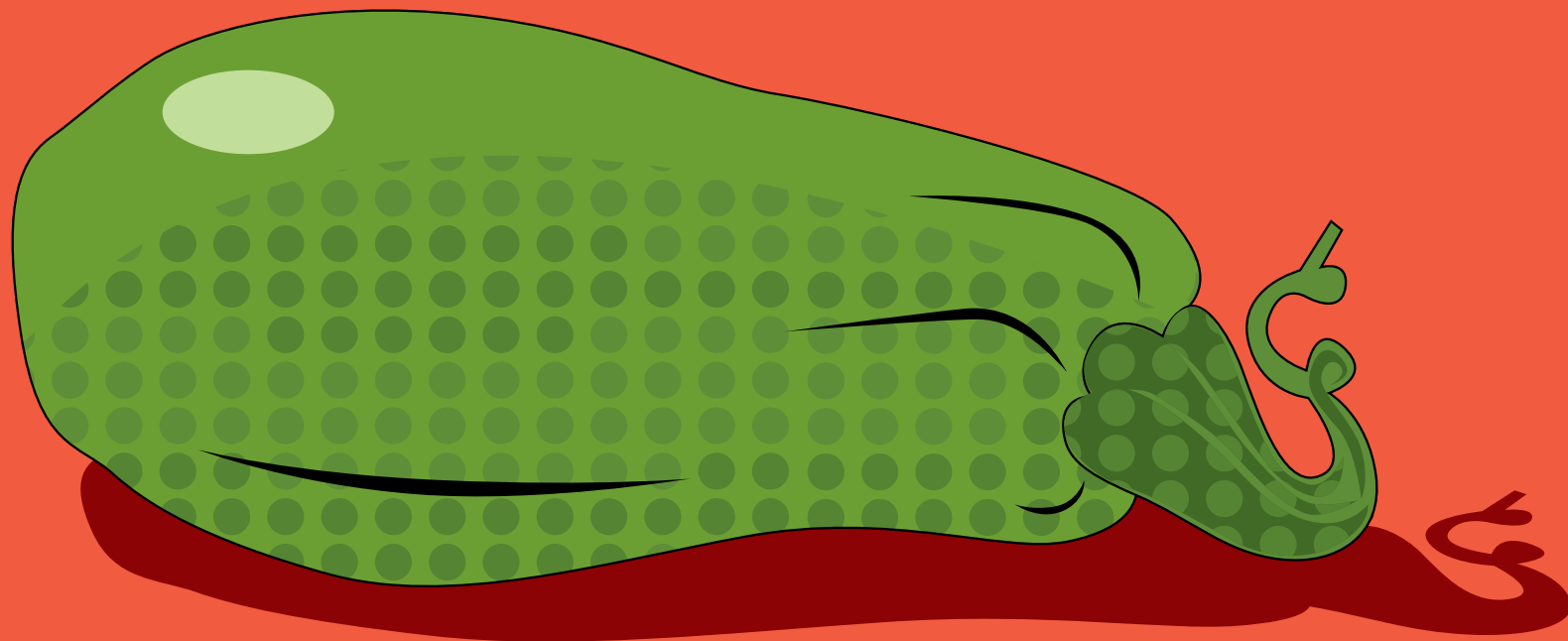
- **Buenos Aires**, Plaza vaticano (9 June – 26 June 2016)
- **Berlin**, Breitscheidplatz (16 June – 23 June 2016)
- **Vienna**, Am Hof (24 June – 8 July 2016)
- **Geneva**, Palace of Nations, interior display (28 June – 15 July 2016)
- **Helsinki**, Keskuskatu (11 August – 23 August 2016)
- **Tallinn**, Vabaduse (25 August – 7 September 2016)
- **Odesa**, Gallery Invouge, interior display (12 September – 19 September 2016)
- **Riga**, Ratslaukums (13 September – 30 September 2016)
- **Cyprus**, Social and Cultural Centre of Pallouriotissa, Nicosia, interior display (8 November – 22 November 2016)



GENERATIONS LIVING TOGETHER

Fruits of Society project furthers bonds between young and old

LENKA VOJNOVIČ



Green, but not useless!

Life can be rich, meaningful and exciting, but that is best achieved if we all live together, regardless of our age. Different generations need to be connected through recognition, acceptance and understanding. Longer life expectancy and lower birth rates are common to all developed European countries, but although increased life expectancy is an outstanding success of modern civilisation, an ageing society inevitably brings numerous changes and challenges.

Several of these challenges are addressed through intergenerational activities and community centres. In intergenerational activities, most learning occurs via non-formal and opportunistic learning activities. Older people have a wealth of lifetime experience, but might encounter physical and mobility impairments. On the other hand, children are very flexible and agile but lack the needed experience to complete tasks. Together they make a perfect blend. Furthermore, the long-term connections established through multigenerational community centres have a high potential for connecting people in a community, sharing knowledge across generations, generating new ideas, and promoting enjoyment.

By meeting and socialising with each other, the participants plant a seed that will breed intergenerational solidarity as a vital component of modern society.

The activities help dissolve age-based prejudice, enhance solidarity, preserve tradition, give meaning to the ageing process, and develop social and support networks within the community. People participating in these activities gradually develop deeper empathy for others and a sense of belonging to the community, which is focused on finding common elements that act as a bridge between people of different generations.

Individuals involved in intergenerational activities will acquire new knowledge, skills and experience, and learn acceptance, co-operation and exchange of knowledge. They will gain social skills and self-respect. By expanding their social networks, participants also gain insight into the life of people of different age groups.



Wrinkled, but full of energy!

FROM THE FRUITS OF SOCIETY TO THE HOUSES OF THE FRUITS OF SOCIETY

In Slovenia there are many organisations which have been successfully carrying out intergenerational activities for years.

One of these, Slovene Philanthropy, has been running the Fruits of Society project since 2006, with the aim of promoting voluntary work and intergenerational co-operation and strengthening the bonds between the young and the elderly. The story of the Fruits of Society began with the engagement of Dr. Janez Drnovšek, the former President of Slovenia, who gave the initiative a public voice.

“If the old and the young help each other, we can do more and create a better society.”

The project is based on voluntary work done by young people for older people living at home, and also work by the elderly for the young, carried out by connecting schools and retirement homes. Young volunteers visit socially-isolated older people at home, talk to them, read them books or newspapers, play board games, and help them with simple chores. For public holidays, schools occasionally ask elderly craftspeople to host workshops of traditional crafts for the pupils.

Participating schools report that these activities help children develop better self-esteem, a deeper sense of responsibility, and reduce prejudice against the elderly.

Voluntary work is also important because it is an opportunity for pupils with lower academic performance.

In addition, it allows schools to develop closer ties with the local community. Another key element is the positive effect which the playful energy, youthful attitude, creativity and attention of young people have on the wellbeing and health of the residents in retirement homes.

The first intergenerational community centre called the House of the Fruits of Society, which was opened by Slovene Philanthropy in Murska Sobota in 2009, was co-funded by the Norwegian financial mechanism. The House is an open and neutral space where users can socialise, learn, and exchange knowledge and experience. It is intended for all local community residents and runs many activities that bring different generations closer together. Five Houses and several other intergenerational centres across Slovenia have started operating in reply to the needs of local communities to ensure greater social cohesion, inclusion and solidarity. These models actively help reduce the negative impact of demographic change and are also recognised as such by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The National Social Care Programme for the following two years anticipates further development of intergenerational or multigenerational centres and their financial support.

SYMBIOSIS FOR HARMONY

This autumn Slovenia’s Prime Minister, Miro Cerar, served as honorary sponsor for another successful Slovenian intergenerational cooperation project. The Symbiosis of Movement volunteering project, which takes place at over 300 locations across Slovenia, has again brought together the young and the old. Project events are an exchange of experience and energy of the participants who exercise in a relaxed setting to improve their physical and mental health, well-being, and self-confidence. Physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle are the cornerstones of a healthy and self-confident society. The Symbiosis of Movement encourages the young and the old to pursue beneficial, healthy lifestyles,” says the prime minister.

Similar intergenerational activities, both formally organised and informal, which are held in Slovenia on a daily basis, play an important role in ensuring the harmonious coexistence of different generations. The older and younger generations often live separately. Older people have little contact with the young and fail to understand their process of growing up. On the other hand, young people could benefit considerably from living with older people and learning from their wisdom of life. In brief, socialising between the young and the elderly is simply the best lesson for life.



Discovering my better layers.

Photo: Nikola Predović
 In the Play: Love's End (Co - production of
 the Mini teater, Mestno gledališče Ptuj, Novo
 Kazalište Zagreb and Zadar Snova

ACTORS PIA ZEMLJIČ AND MARKO MANDIČ

“There is nothing better
 than a good duel between actors”

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

Pia and Marko. She has a warm personality and is a little restrained, but is very determined when on stage. He is energetic and effervescent. To count the many awards they have received so far would be too time-consuming and tiresome. All one needs do is watch them perform. While they are both professionally successful as individuals in Slovenia and abroad, their paths are intertwined on the intimate level as well. Their family and relationship are a priority, and represent a solid foundation giving them energy to express themselves artistically.

Pia, as of 1 November this year, you have been a permanent member of the Slovenian National Theatre (SNT) Drama Ljubljana ensemble. Your first appearance on that stage (the play is in a study phase) will be in the epic War and Peace. A new beginning, new faces, and new performance interactions. How do you experience becoming a part of the ensemble? You and Marko will not only co-perform in a play but also work together in the same theatre.

I am really looking forward to it. I am excited. Of course, I have known actors who will now be my colleagues for many years, from the SNT Drama Ljubljana theatre and the Ljubljana City Theatre (MGL), and with some of them I am good friends. The play *War and Peace* will be a co-production of the two mentioned theatres and the Cankarjev dom cultural and congress centre. While it is true that, so far, I have not had the opportunity to work with these actors as a co-performer, I worked with some of them at film. For me, this will surely be a breath of fresh air. I am also keen to discover how I can orientate myself among all these geniuses (laughter).

There is nothing better than a good duel between actors and a collective performance to which they are entirely committed.

The War and Peace will certainly be interesting. What exactly do the study preparations for the play look like?

Marko: For now, the actors have to read the entire *War and Peace* novel and thoroughly prepare for the meeting with the Romanian producer, Silviu Purcărete, in order to bring to the masterpiece the most optimal theatrical form. The first rehearsal will take place on 21 November and the première is scheduled for 21 January next

year at the Cankarjev dom cultural and congress centre. Like Pia, I am looking forward to be a part of this challenge, to work with new colleagues and with the director who, judging from his plays, has an astonishing imagination, and to attend rehearsals on the stage of the Gallusova dvorana hall, which I find intriguing in terms of its size and unusual laws of physics.

Marko, unlike Pia, you have never performed in comedy plays, right?

Marko: Actually, no. Except once. At the beginning of my acting career, in 1998, I had a part in the comedy entitled *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*. At that time, I and my academy mate Maša Derganc were new at SNT Drama Ljubljana. We performed in the comedy, which was directed by Boris Cavazza, with two other experienced actors, legends of the Slovenian comedy – Gregor Bakovič and Bojan Emeršič. You observe, work and learn. This was a great experience for me. I do not recall having a part in any other comedy besides that one. Although it might be possible I turned them into tragedies. Comedy is obviously not my genre.

Pia: Actually, comedy is a genre that is just right for him. For the time being, just behind four walls, but when he starts, it is difficult to stop him (laughter).

Pia, you have more experience performing in comedies, right? And not only behind four walls (laughter)?

Yes. However, I think it is awfully hard to achieve good quality in comedy. I performed in many comedies and was not always satisfied. Even as a member of the audience I have high standards towards performances labelled as comedies. To create an intelligent and subversive comedy which has an appropriate turn of events and hurtful truth behind the laughter etc. and is genuinely funny

without having to pretend and lie about its quality, it is necessary to work hard and with mathematical precision. Besides, it is essential to consider other factors such as focus, to what extent are actors in harmony with the system of the play, as well as the pace and rhythm of the entire performance. What is crucial in comedies is to remain serious during the entire performance (laughter). This is how I approach roles in comedies. A good comedy can be a top quality performance.

Does it happen that you find a play boring before you even start it?

Marko: There are moments when I want to throw in a towel. Sometimes I get a thought about changing my profession. But these moments are rare. You get bored only if the work processes are boring. But so far I have been lucky to almost always be engaged in intriguing projects, where I was able to find different strategies to address the recurring traditional themes found in the majority of works, such as revolutionary changes, freedom, vindictiveness, state, love, jealousy, elitism, dissidence, marginalisation, happiness, misfortune, injustice etc., either on my own or through encouragement by co-creators.

These topics are a constituent part of our daily discussions, but when we try to determine the very essence, we discover it is not an easy task.

What is even more challenging is to show and trigger something new. And poignant.

You both work together in the play called Love's End. This was the first play in which you performed as the only actors and you also happened to be romantically involved in real life. The play itself was very personal. Was it hard to perform in it?

Pia: I would like him to answer first since I get exhausted only by thinking about Love's End (laughter).

Marko: This play is truly specific. It is composed of two soliloquies. In the first hour of the play, the one who speaks is the one who is leaving – the man. Marko. Then, he is stripped of any possibility to have a reply as only the woman speaks after that. Pia. I would like to emphasise our names since the author of the play, Pascal Rambert, demanded that actors address each other with their real names during the performance. It is what makes this play special. The use of real names makes everything real. The fact that we are also a couple privately brought an additional dimension to the set-

ting of the play directed by Ivica Buljan and performed at the Mini teater Ljubljana.

The circulation of thoughts and emotions between us develops on a parallel, strictly private level.

Everything that comes out of our mouths resonates on this level. The intensity therefore depends on our current private life. The audience mostly knows we are a couple and that is why mixing the documentary elements and fiction is even more explicit.

Pia: These are two amazingly written roles that demand our complete dedication.

Can you name the roles that have defined you the most?

Marko: It is difficult to specify such roles. The first roles you take part in are definitely those that lay foundations for future performances, and, yes, they define you. We can be happy if different roles are assigned to us and if we work with different directors who have different poetics in directing a play. In a solo performance by the Via Negativa theatrical group led by director Bojan Jablanovec, which was entitled MandičStroj, I had the opportunity to revise the roles I had in 2010 to determine my mannerism, recurring patterns and elements of spoken language, movement and sound, and somehow categorise them into groups. MandičStroj is an hour-and-a-half collage of thirty-eight performances, which includes the most extreme and characteristic segments. It is like archives that have been revived, with co-performers being taken from the audience. The most recent performance I had the honour to participate in last December at the La Mama theatre in New York is Pylade by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Under director Ivica Buljan, we presented a passage from mythical times full of blood revenges into a period dominated by modern democracy in a strong, physically intensive way, as a mixture of different theatrical genres and by incorporating performing arts. In other words, a total theatre.

Pia: I prefer film as a genre because it is more intimate. Your acting can be brought to perfection. However, it is true that you receive more response when performing in theatre. The flow of energy between the performers and the audience is vital. When we shine and when we fail – everything can be felt and every performance is unique. I love both. I also cannot decide about the role that determined me. All roles are special in their own way.

Some of the roles get more attention and are awarded, while others pass by unno-

ticed even though they provoke a tectonic move in you.

These roles make you go deeper and the new discoveries you make cannot be forgotten.

Marko: Films are a compelling challenge. However, it is true that film editing is decisive in determining how actors present themselves. If the actor's "mistakes" are not edited out, they remain visible. The process of montage in a theatre happens on the go. Everything depends on a given moment, on performance.

You have worked with domestic and foreign producers. Do you often compete for roles abroad? What is it like to work with domestic and with foreign producers?

Marko: Entering a new circle and trying to acquire recognition from those who do not know you and establishing yourself in an environment where the only criterion is your work is always positive. A foreign environment forces you to put more intensity in your expression and work. I am happy that Ivica Buljan invited me to work in France, Croatia and the USA. Every time I returned home I worked with more enthusiasm. It is also essential and positive that foreign ensembles come to Slovenia as exchanging and introducing new energies is enriching. I always keep my fingers crossed to be invited to perform in a play directed by a foreign director.

Speaking different languages in such projects makes me feel like I am at the centre of the world, in a metropolis.

Do you have an agent abroad?

Marko: In 2007, the Slovenski filmski center agency proposed me for the Shooting Star, for which I am very grateful since I was able to attend the Berlinale film festival, where I met casting directors and agents. From then on, I have been represented by the Das Imperium agency from Berlin and a few times I had the opportunity to shoot in Germany. The first such appearance was in a television series called *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* (In the Face of the Crime) by Dominik Graf, and in 2012 I acted in *Lose Your Head* by Stefan Westerwelle and in *Gold*, an art western by Thomas Arslan. The latter was an incredible experience since the entire film was shot amidst the pristine nature of Canada.

You have both recently performed in a film called Nightlife (Nočno življenje). Pia, you had the leading role in it, have you not?

Pia: The Slovenian premiere of *Nightlife* by Damjan Kozole, which has been screened at international film festivals for some time now, will take place at the Ljubljana International Film Festival (LIFFE). It was a great experience to work on this very special authorial film as the performance was extremely minimalistic, which, for me, was a challenge in its own.

Marko: This is a film about a society driven by fear.

The numerous awards and acknowledgements you both received so far are hard to be ignored. We could say "there have been many and there are a lot more to come". Is there an award you are particularly happy about?

Pia: As an actor, you are happy about all of them. You get a pat on your shoulder, sometimes even a little hug, but in reality you do not work to get prizes. Art is not a competition for me. Awards are unpredictable; they depend on luck and coincidence. I felt honoured with each acknowledgement I received, but nothing lasts forever. I do not rest on my laurels.

Marko: You are always pleased to be awarded. A paradox is that you only discover how much an award means to you when you do not receive it. If the pain becomes unbearable, it means you need to receive an award at some point. I like to joke around, especially as comedy is not my genre that my biggest goal is to be awarded the title of *Žlahtni komedijant* (awarded to actors in Slovenian comedy).

Which Pia already has since she was given the female equivalent of this title, which is "Žlahtna komedijantka".

Marko: That is true. She has already reached the finish line (laughter). But truth be told, I am most moved if someone comes up to me after a show and gives me a handshake saying thank you.

Pia: So am I.

You two are very likeable persons. You appear to be somewhat playful and I have a feeling that you have a nice family. You have two sons, France and Voranc. According to current statistics, both these names are considered slightly archaic, more suitable for older adults. Where did you get the idea to choose these names? Was it because you work in culture?

Pia: Have you told her?

This sounds as an interesting introduction. What is the story behind it?

Marko: Pia comes from Slovenj Gradec and I am from Velenje. In both towns, the spoken language is influenced by the Koroška dialect. And Voranc is a name typical of the Koroška region. We de-

cided to name our other son France because we thought it somehow goes nicely with Voranc (laughter). It was only after deciding on these two names that we discovered a handy explanation why we actually selected them (laughter). We realised that Pia used to live at the Vorančev trg square, and Prežihov Voranc was a Slovenian writer and politician, while my family lived at the Prešernova cesta street since I was one year old, and France Prešeren is the most prominent Slovenian poet with his poem Zdravljica used in the Slovenian national anthem.

Pia: We took quite a long time to choose names for our children, right? During his stay at the maternity ward, Voranc did not have a name for four days. In terms of numerology, their names both yield the same number; that is to avoid any complaints in the future (laughter).

What about the merry December? How will you spend the advent time?

Pia: As every year, we will ignore the forced ravishment and avoid the feverish last minute buying of gifts. Then, we will notice that we have forgotten to buy half of presents and we try to somehow find a last minute solution to the problem. Marko will make collages (laughter). We will spend our time in the mountains with families who like camping, just like we do, so the children will be able to play and relax. Last year we were at the Trilobit mountain

hut above the town of Jesenice. Of course, we will also spend some time with the Mandić and Zemljič families, have merry dinners with too much food on the table and debates with our loved ones, as we usually do.

Marko: I would really like to write a season's greeting card or two. But there is never enough time. Sometimes our cards do not get sent until March. Our living room typically gets adorned with some rather old decorations from my childhood. They hang from the ceiling and we usually forget to take them down after the holidays. We do that sometime in June. Or July. Something like that. Last year, the boys made a Christmas tree out of Legos. It was a miniature one. And it had a secret place for candy stash.

Pia: Sometimes we bake.

Marko: Unfortunately, most performances take place right before New Year, but I and Pia try very hard for our kids to live the Christmas spirit. To walk through a snowy night, full of Christmas lights. I am a fan of Ded Moroz, the guy with a grey fur cap, white beard and a whitish cape. The western version named Santa Clause does not convince me. Sometimes Saint Nicholas visits us and brings oranges and dried fruit. Just like in the old times. I remember how my sister and I prepared red plates for St. Nicholas to put gifts on. After waking up in the morning, I would find fruits and a tube of glue. And I was happy. I forgot why. Probably I liked the scent of the glue.



Photo: Peter Uhan
In the Play: Disident Arnož (SNT Drama Ljubljana)

Marko Mandić

Marko Mandić is one of the most prominent actors of the Slovenian National Theatre SNT Drama Ljubljana. His effervescence and complete commitment to roles leave hardly anyone indifferent. He does not perform a role. He determines it. American critics described his performance in the La MaMa theatre in New York, a place where Robert Wilson, Robert De Niro, Sam Sheppard and Patti Smith started their paths in acting, as astonishing. He has been awarded the Borštnik Award several times and is a recipient of the Prešeren Fund Award and many other prizes.



Photo: Jaka Babnik
In the Play: The Learned Ladies after the motifs of The Learned Ladies by Molière (SLG Celje)

Pia Zemljič

Pia Zemljič has also won the Prešeren Fund Award and is a multiple recipient of other awards. At the last LIFFe Ljubljana Film festival, she won the award for the best female role prize for her performance in Nightlife. This year, she also received the Vesna award for the leading female role for the same performance at the Slovenian Film Festival. Furthermore, Pia received the Borštnik Award for two remarkable performances, i.e. for Philaminte in Les Femmes savantes (The Learned Ladies) in the production of SLG Celje and the Ptuj municipal theatre, and for her interpretation of Mrs Flamm in Rose Bernd performed by SLG Celje. She started her career at the Slovenian National Theatre (SNG) Maribor. For some time, she worked as an independent artist, continuing her path at the Celje People's Theatre (SLG Celje). Recently, she has joined the SNT Drama Ljubljana ensemble. She is sought after not only by theatres but also by film producers.



THE YOUNG ARE CHANGING THE KOČEVJE REGION FOR THE BETTER

Friendlier public spaces, and home-grown food on the doorstep

PETRA ŠOLAR

PHOTO: FREELoadERS MEDIA HOUSE

Weary walkers, curious tourists, playful children and romantic couples - all are drawn to these comfortable places of rest, if only for a few minutes. They are like a sofa in the corner of a living room. These spacious wooden benches, part of an urban furniture system, were designed by three young architects from the Kočevje area.

In 2014 Sara Hočevar, Hana Geder and Tanja Štajdohar won over the commission at the design competition for wooden urban furniture. Two years later, Kočevje and its surroundings boast 31 such systems. In the land of forests, which take up a total of 466 km² of the Kočevje municipality's 555 km², wood was the obvious choice of material for the benches. Less obviously, though, the wooden benches are also very comfortable. It was quite a challenge.

“Our biggest challenge was to make benches that are vandal-proof,” admits 27-year-old Tanja Štajdohar.

The concept is simple. The basic element of the new Kočevje street furniture system is a wood beam, 10 x 14cm, cut to length. The beams are then assembled to make benches (low or high, short or long), back rests, or bin stands. The shapes of these elements are adapted to the terrain and needs. Robust but massive I-, L-, U- or O-shaped units offer a wealth of options for leisure time activities – they can be used for seating, resting or playing. They also provide for more comfortable use of public space. The young Kočevje architects firmly believe that public areas should respond to the needs of users and encourage them to linger for a while. They should offer much more than just a chance to observe the surroundings. On the other hand, the young architects are also aware that street furniture must be visually appealing.

“We wanted to make a good product,” says Tanja Štajdohar. They had only a day to polish their ideas. The design competition was a one-day workshop held as part of the 2nd Wood Festival. Nine

girls applied, and were divided into three groups. At the end of the day, the commission selected the solution proposed by the trio, who already knew each other but had never participated in a design competition together. The architects chose the beam as their main element because it is easily available, does not require processing and has standard dimensions. Wood beams are also highly resistant to weather and durable. "Beams do not need painting or further processing. We softened this robust unprocessed wood through combinations of various elements which complement, but also support, each other," explains Tanja Štajdohar.

The architects first made a 3D model, and the urban furniture prototype was placed on the lawn in front of the secondary school. The location was selected on purpose as it is highly frequented. Crowds of people walk through the park between the shopping centre, sports venues, and primary and secondary schools every day. The prototype successfully sustained all forms of everyday use. Six months later, after negotiations with subcontractors and several improvements, 12 systems were set up along pathways, the Rinža river, and on green areas. A year later, another 18 followed. The municipality provided wood from the Kočevje forests, whilst the craftsmen working for the secondary school processed wood for the street furniture, and made metal parts. The new benches became part of Kočevje's urban space and the town began to implement the concept of a local circular economy, which is based on its own resources, wood processing skills and the expertise of young Kočevje residents.

STOPPING AT NOTHING FOR FRESH IDEAS

Successful team work on the one hand and inefficient use of space on the other have encouraged the three architects and several other young artists from Kočevje to set up the 'Urbani blog' (Urban Den) society. Its members – currently a dozen – instantly joined the project 'Vsi na ploščad!' (All onto the Platform!)

Kočevje had been searching for the best solution to renovate the town centre, and this year they set about the task in a different way - by including the general public.

In the course of the project, the Municipality of Kočevje held several workshops, which also attracted members of the 'Urban Den.' Drawing an outline of the ruined castle on the ground in the town centre, placing flags on a model of Kočevje, attending lectures and children's workshops were just a few of the summer activities that made the people of Kočevje think about what the town centre needs, and what it could do without. "We did some brainstorming," says Tanja, adding: "People see the same things as we architects do." We all want more public areas along the river, recreation and play areas, and designated areas for pedestrians and cyclists. The events and surveys enabled the society members, all younger than 30, and the municipality to obtain sufficient coverage of public opinion to start a project. This project will form the basis for the new appearance of the centre of Kočevje, which will be more beautiful, more comfortable and, most importantly, adapted to the needs of its people.

THE TREASURES OF THE KOČEVJE REGION

Young generations of Kočevje residents are also aware of the importance of ensuring food self-sufficiency. Slovenia's level of self-sufficiency in vegetables is rather poor: according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia it reached a low of 38% in 2014. Although its unspoilt nature and abundant agricultural land make the Kočevje region extremely favourable for farming and livestock-rearing activities, local farmers were not commercially successful. "None of our farmers were successful in bidding for public tenders," says 31-year-old Andrej Mladenovič. Worse, it was impossible to buy homegrown food in Kočevje! Even one of the largest organic farmers from Gotenica, who owns 200 cattle and processes organic milk into yoghurt and cheese, was finding it difficult to place products on the market. In order to help, the young have come up with a different idea: Last year they founded a cooperative society with the help of the Kočevje Business Incubator. "The cooperative society 'Zakladi Kočevske' (Treasures of the Kočevje region) has brought together local food producers under a single trademark, and expanded their offer," Mladenovič explains. The idea of a cooperative was first proposed by Mladenovič's colleague, Jernej Kalan, several years ago, and the incubator's consultants helped to set it up and get it started. The founding members of the cooperative are mostly farmers, along with several local enterprises. The cooperative has become the link between farmers and consumers. It

assists farmers in renting more land and opens the door for them to sell products to kindergartens, schools and other institutions. Consumers, who were initially able to buy homegrown food at the market in Kočevje, are now also able to place their orders online. In the first nine months of this year, the cooperative sold 2700kg of food, mostly apples, pears, sauerkraut, potatoes, cheese, curd, prunes and homemade tea blends, as well as almost 2500 litres of organically produced milk, 1900 litres of organic yoghurt, and just under 5000 eggs. The headmasters of the local kindergarten and schools, who support local self-sufficiency, are very satisfied with the food. The cooperative operates as a social enterprise and employs one person, who runs the homegrown food market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, assists food suppliers in sales and promotion activities, and makes contact with potential buyers.

"Our aim is to identify the needs of the local environment, and encourage farm-

ers to meet the demand for fruit and vegetables," says Branko Merhar, president of the cooperative.

However, Mladenovič admits that their plans for the year were overly ambitious. One of the ideas that has not (yet) materialised is a meat packing plant. The regulations are clear in this respect; meat cannot be sold without a proper plant. "A lot of cattle are bred in the Kočevje region, but currently we cannot sell a single steak," says Mladenovič, summing up the absurdity of the situation. Despite this setback, the achievements of the cooperative are impressive. For example, they have arranged for the rental of garden plots on the outskirts of Kočevje, and even fenced the plots with the help of student volunteers. There are many plans for the future, but the top priority is to show food producers all the options available and encourage them to make the necessary changes, which might provide further opportunities for (self-)employment.



SLOVENIA IN THE WORLD TRAVEL MARKET

Nature, infrastructure, action, sports

TEXT AND PHOTO: SLOVENIAN TOURIST BOARD



On the global map, Slovenia is increasingly establishing itself as a country for green, active and healthy five-star experiences. Its unique unspoilt nature, excellent infrastructure and expertise are recognised by the rest of the world as ideal for athletic preparation and active breaks. These qualities, together with excellent services, place Slovenia among the increasingly attractive target destinations for organising sports preparation and international sporting events.

It was as a destination offering top-quality experiences in sports preparation, high achievements and active breaks that Slovenia presented itself at the World Travel Market (WTM) in London at the beginning of November. The presentation of Slovenia and Slovenian tourism highlighted the key competitive advantages of our country as a **green, active and healthy destination** and, for the first time, as an excellent sports destination. At this globally renowned professional tourism event, Slovenia presented itself as a country of remarkable natural resources that inspires top athletes, locals and tourists for active breaks, and thus for health preservation or restoration.

1. ACCESSIBLE

Slovenia is located in the heart of Europe.

2. DIVERSE

Slovenia is the only EU country that offers the diversity of Alpine, sub-Mediterranean and continental climates.

3. VICTORIOUS

Slovenia has two million people and more than five thousand categorised athletes. At the last Olympic Games, Slovenia was ranked number one with regard to the number of medals considering the per capita gross domestic product and the second highest medal-earner per capita!

4. ADAPTABLE

Slovenia offers luxurious conditions, hospitality and adaptability with accommodation and organisation for outdoor sports and a

modern and diverse infrastructure for athletes in various sporting disciplines.

5. WORLD-CLASS

The knowledge obtained by Slovenian institutes, clinics and health resorts is inseparably connected with what Slovenian sports destinations have to offer.

Slovenia has been blessed with incredible natural features appropriate for outdoor sport and recreation.

Slovenia has developed capacities for indoor sports and it has modern sporting venues.

ATHLETES – AMBASSADORS OF OUR COUNTRY

Slovenia is becoming an increasingly recognised destination in the world and its visibility is strengthened by internationally recognised Slovenian personalities – the tourist ambassadors of Slovenia. This is particularly true for sports. In Slovenia, sport and tourism are closely linked, going hand in hand.

At this year's presentation of Slovenia, the top Slovenian athletes Tina Maze and Luka Špič addressed the visitors to the Slovenian booth.

SPORT DESTINATION SLOVENIA

Green. Active. Healthy.

A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD AND DESIGNATION FOR BLEED AND SLOVENIA

The Global Sport Tourism Summit, the first global meeting of experts in this field, also took place at this year's Travel Market and Slovenia was ranked among the four finalists for the Global Sport Tourism Impact Award, which was given for the first time this year. Bled was awarded the well-established Sport Tourism Town designation for 2016, while Kranjska Gora was also one of the finalists competing for this prestigious designation.



Tina Maze, the most successful alpine skier in the world: *"Why Slovenia? I have travelled around the whole world and visited many countries. In my opinion, Slovenia's biggest gift is that it is small and accessible to everyone. Considering that my life revolves around sport, I have to say that Slovenia has many possibilities in this regard – for those who like to ski, bike, climb, surf, hike the hills or are involved in sports in some other way. In Slovenia, the forest is green, the sea is blue, the snow is white, the water is pure, the wine and beer are excellent, people are simple and free, and sports champions are great. We like to feel and share the love from Slovenia with the world, thus we invite you to visit us."*

Luka Špik, Slovenian rower and Olympic champion: *"Bled is a destination that fascinates every tourist. Bled is a recognised tourist icon, as well as a destination where sport is written in capital letters. Rowing, volleyball, mountain climbing, hockey and numerous other sports can be found at the top level in this destination's relatively small area. An excellent tourist destination, sport, the hotel industry and hospitality are a combination that is extremely well-appreciated in London and the wider British area, since sport has a remarkable tradition in Great Britain and achieves first-class results. Thus, the presentation of Bled as a tourist and sports destination for British sport and tourism lovers is of key importance."*



Maja Pak, MSc, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board: *"This prestigious award is of exceptional importance for the positioning of Slovenia as an excellent destination for sports tourism, athletic preparation and the organisation of international sporting events. Slovenia being one of the finalists and the selection of Bled as the Sport Tourism Town 2016 are recognition that we have jointly made a big step forwards in the development and marketing of sports tourism."*

SCIENCE MONTH - A GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

How science helps us change and understand the world

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT



People frequently assume that science is something isolated – something that takes place behind closed laboratory doors, too complicated to be understood. They may fail to see how it affects social life. So in a Science Month initiative, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport takes a look at the life of researchers from a different perspective. Rather than being an end in itself, research affects our understanding of the world and our changing society; it also affects how the world we live in is shaped and develops.

If we want to know how science works, we must first understand it. Instead of gazing at puzzling formulas, reading complicated discourses or expressing our concern over the lack of budgetary funds, listening to researchers and their arguments as to why their discoveries, in particular, are important for the world we live in makes science easier to understand. That is why science needs to be promoted.

Research and its results need to be brought closer to the wider public.

We need to explain how progress brought about by scientific findings, which are all too often overlooked (or not understood), manifests itself. Therefore, it is not superfluous to take care not only of funding, but also of the promotion and reputation of science in society.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF SCIENCE

Our aim at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport was to present science in an at least slightly different way than usually, so we decided to organise a series of national, regional and international events related to presentation, work, successful results and promotion of Slovenian science and researchers. With a variety of contents combining a series of themes and focuses, which we presented under the name of Science Month, we are trying to stimulate reflection about the meaning of science and research in our society, as well as to attract various stakeholders to participate. This the first such concentration of various activities brought to-

gether under the common title: science and its importance and impact on society. By presenting science through the key topics relevant for concrete time periods, the Ministry hopes to make the event a tradition. The events are organised in autumn, which also commemorates the birth of a great patron and supporter of science in Slovenia, baron Žiga Zois. Thus, the central event of Science Month is the conferring of the Zois Award and Certificate of Recognition, the awarding of the Ambassador of Science of the Republic of Slovenia Certificate of Recognition and the awarding of the Puh Certificate of Recognition. At the award ceremony, Slovenian scientists are awarded the highest national awards and prizes for their most outstanding achievements in recent years in scientific, research and development activities.

HORIZON 2020

Within Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Slovenia ranks among the most successful countries in terms of the ratio between funding applications and receipt of funding.

Horizon 2020 is the most important financial instrument for the implementation of the Innovation Union Strategy and the Europe 2020 Strategy, with the goal of improving the European Union's competitiveness by 2020. At a conference that will take place exactly three years after the official beginning and presentation of



Photo: Primož Lavre

Horizon 2020 in Slovenia, we will present the results of the successful participation of Slovenian applicants in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the 2014–2020 period, we will discuss the possibilities to improve the Programme, the evaluation procedures, the influence of individual countries on research and examples of best practice. In the discussion, we will also evaluate the effectiveness of various instruments of the Framework Programme in relation to the ERA's (European Research Area) key objectives and the EU 2020 Strategy. At the same time, we want to immediately set foundations for the preparation of the Republic of Slovenia's starting position for the new Framework Programme 2021–2027, for which we are making efforts to improve the conditions for participation of Slovenian scientists and research institutions.

In November, a Slovenian-Italian research day was organised, on which the strategic research framework of both countries was presented, aimed at improvement of conditions for further cooperation and strengthening of links within the region on the basis of the established links in the field of research and culture. In Trieste, where the event took place, research institutions and individual researchers presented their work, further fostering and enhancing the already successful bilateral cooperation.

OPENAIRE2020

In cooperation with the University of Ljubljana, a partner in the OpenAIRE 2000 project, the Ministry will organise presentations by European experts on the transition towards an open science system in the European Research Area (policies, the European Open Science Cloud, OpenAIRE services available to researchers and project coordinators). Slovenia participates in this international endeavour with its National strategy of open access to scientific publications and research data in Slovenia 2015–2017, which defines the national vision, open access to scientific information from publicly financed research (in the form of scientific publications and research data) and their exemption from the system of payment for access and reuse. In this way, openly accessible scientific information benefits Slovenian citizens, research and the economy.

Responding to the expressed hope of Slovenian researchers to improve their bidding success in ERC (European Research Council) calls for tenders for the most outstanding research ideas, the Ministry set out to prepare a regional ERC conference aimed at tackling the relatively lower success in acquiring ERC funding for projects prepared in Slovenia and the wider region. The analyses show that local, institutional support to ERC applicants is important for achieving final success. For this reason, the event will gather representatives of national institutions that can contribute to more successful bidding in ERC calls for tenders, potential ERC applicants as well as representatives of the ERC Scientific Council and the ERC Executive Agency to discuss the best ways of supporting excellent scientists in their countries and of assisting them with a successful application. The event, aimed at extending collaboration, is a forum for dialogue, exchange of experiences, networking and learning from best practices among various participants.



Photo: Primož Lavre

SLOVENE AT FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

World Festival of Slovene Culture

MOJCA NIDORFER ŠIŠKOVIČ

Between 3 and 9 December 2016, World Festival of Slovene Culture will be held at more than 50 foreign universities which have Slovene lectureships or departments of Slovene Studies. This is the eighth such project in organisation of the Slovene at Foreign Universities (STU) programme, by the Centre for Slovene as Second and Foreign Language, which is part of the Department of Slovene Studies at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana.

Audiences from universities and the general public will be presented with an e-classroom developed within the project. It contains all electronic teaching materials produced by Slovene teachers to facilitate the teaching of the language and culture at foreign universities.

Also the booklet with a brief presentation of Slovene culture was published and can be reached in Slovene and English with many web links at the webpage centerslo.si/na-tujih-univerzah/kulturni-projekti/

The chapters State and Nation, History, Natural and Cultural Heritage, Economy, Tourism and Culinary, Science and Technology, Literature, Music, Fine Arts, Architecture and Design, Performing Arts and Film, and Sports will be brought to life in a number of events during World Festival of Slovene Culture, which will start on the 3 December, when Slovenia celebrates its Culture Day with film and literary evenings, guest lecturers, artists and culture professionals from Slovenia and abroad, as well as through culinary tours of Slovenian regions.

The project will be carried out in cooperation with foreign universities which include Slovene into their study programmes, and with students of Slovene, Slovenian diplomatic representative offices, the Ljudmila Society, and many other organisations in Slovenia and abroad.

For more information about these events please follow the Facebook page of the Centre for Slovene at www.centerslo.si, web page www.culture.si, Slovene and foreign media.

SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY



=

•

Slovene at foreign
universities

WORLD
FESTIVAL OF
SLOVENE
CULTURE

3 - 9

DECEMBER

2016



CENTRE FOR SLOVENE AS A
SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE
DEPARTMENT OF SLOVENE STUDIES

Univerza v Ljubljani
Filozofska fakulteta



MONTH OF DESIGN

“Creative tourism” in green Slovenia

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: ZAVOD BIG ARCHIVES



The 14th Month of Design, the annual display of Slovenia's greatest creative and design achievements, started on 18 October with the national design awards ceremony. Under the title 'Creative Tourism,' this year's festival combines exhibitions, a conference and other events. At the opening ceremony, international awards were presented for the best products showcased at the Brands and Signs exhibition, as well as national design awards in four categories: Design of the Year, Interior of the Year, Timeless and Promising.

The underlying theme of this year's event is no coincidence.

Recently, Slovenia has become the world's first country to be declared a green destination.

For several years now, tourism has been one of the few industries to register constant growth, but its potential, as well as the potential of the wood industry, remains underexploited. Our aim is to promote tourism and wood through design and architecture. Design solutions can prompt people in the two sectors to collaborate, confident that such cooperation will generate fascinating outcomes increasing the value-added of both industries.

The international Brands & Signs exhibition showcases a selection of original, well-made products in both product and fashion design from all over the world. The Bomboni exhibition featured a series of tourist rooms which were designed by architects and designers and other representatives of creative industries in cooperation with partners from the economy.

The Month of Design, organised by Zavod Big, hosted contact tables, workshops, design tasting, and an economic-architectural forum. It also housed two exhibitions, Slovenska Vinopeka (Bread

& Wine) and Akademije, which was a presentation of higher education providers in the field of design and architecture. Slovenska Vinopeka consists of three cardboard structures, the interior of which was designed by the students of the Ljubljana Faculty of Architecture in cooperation with partners from the economy. The idea of Vinopeka (Bread & Wine) integrates economic issues and professional business topics with the wine culture, promotion of high-quality wine growers and their wines, and creation of new partnerships and market opportunities.

The conference and opening of the Renovation for Creative Tourism exhibition stressed that restoration of historic buildings is a key indicator of cultural diversity in the world that is becoming increasingly globally monotonous.

Improper refurbishment can destroy old buildings, or at least their authenticity, while appropriate building renovation rejuvenates buildings and at the same time helps to keep the area inhabited. The exhibition showed examples of good renovation of old traditional Slovenian houses for tourist purposes, which show positive economic and social effects. The round-table discussion was

Zmago Novak, Director of Zavod Big: Well-informed tourists are increasingly drawn to good architecture. An excellent example of this is Hiša Raduha with its tree house and renovated hayrack. Slovenia has great potential for boutique tourist architecture, which is particularly appealing to travellers who are looking for a unique travelling experience and wish to get to know the country, its people and culture. I am delighted to see the rising awareness of the benefits of wood structures. Today the concept of a house is primarily about the quality of living.



chaired by architects Aleksandra Leban Meze, Sanja Premrn, Silvija Kajzer and Aleš Hafner, as well as the investor of the renovation project in the Pisari village and editor of the Traven web platform, Vinko Zupančič.

The Home of Slovenian Design exhibition shows a trendy apartment designed exclusively with products by Slovenian designers. Its initial design, execution and final image was the work of the Ropot Culture Society, which has earlier presented a conceptually similar project, a pop-up flat 'I Feel Design', in Berlin. Ropot's team led by architect Tina Semolič fitted the apartment with the help of realtor Mesto nepremičnin and the owners of the apartment. More than 34 designers were involved in the project.

ALPINA NORDIC SKIING RACING BOOT RECEIVES TIMELESS SLOVENIAN DESIGN AWARD

Alpina Racing ESK PRO was presented with the 2016 Timeless Slovenian Design award. Along with several other prizes, this award was presented at the opening ceremony of the Month of Design in Ljubljana. The Design of the Year award went to the Nico Less chair by Primož Jeza Studio.

The Alpina ESK PRO Nordic skiing racing boot was designed by Studio Miklavc (Jure Miklavc, Silva Vitez and Jože Carli), which has cooperated with Alpina since 1998. The benefits of Alpina racing



nordic boots have brought the company outstanding business success in Slovenia and worldwide. "The decorated product marks the pinnacle of fruitful collaboration between Studio Miklavc and Alpina's expert team," emphasised the explanation of the award.

The Nico Less chair by Primož Jeza Studio (designer Primož Jeza and his colleagues Diana Savković and Dušan Sekulić) is a response to consumerism and environment pollution, and addresses the human need to reduce our carbon footprint and rediscover waste as an industrial material of the future. "A tribute to the great industrial designer Niko Kralj, Nico Less is a revival of simplicity," said the judges.

The NLB Innovative Entrepreneurship Centre designed by Atelje Vozlič (Vesna Vozlič Košir and Matej Vozlič) was declared Best Public Interior of 2016, and Apartment SP in Ljubljana by Sadar + Vuga (Jurij Sadar, Boštjan Vuga, Tina Hočevnar) topped the list in the category Best Private Interior of 2016.

The awards in the category of promising design students went to Žan Brezec (Academy of Fine Arts and Design, or AFAD), and Lucija Potočnik and Anja Črnič (Faculty of Design), for industrial design. In the field of architecture, the Promising award was awarded to Kaja Todorovič (Faculty of Architecture), Miha Bevc (AFAD), and Anja Rakun, Doroteja Kavaš, Larissa de Cavwer, Matej Mlinar, Mirna Miklič, Teja Vrankar, Žiga Deršek, Agnieszka Žuchlinska, Ana Pišot, Nuša Švara, Tina Nunar and Živa Turk (all AFAD).

In fashion design the title of promising designer was awarded to Nejc Šubic and the group pH 15 with colleagues (all Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering), Zala Kontrec and Andreja Najvirt (Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Maribor), and Polona Roblek (Faculty of Design).



ALPINA AND DRAŽ

Two top Slovenian designers cooperate on exclusive footwear

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: ALPINA ARCHIVES

Combine tradition and quality with exclusive and inspiring design and a unique shoe collection is born. The new line just launched is the second joint project by the Draž dress designers and Alpina Footwear. The first limited edition footwear they designed together in 2013 was so well received that they have decided to continue collaboration.



All shoes in the Alpina Draž collection are of top quality and superior design, with superb comfort. These elegant interpretations of comfortable casual footwear in bold colours and carefully crafted patterns give the collection a touch of exclusivity. "Our cooperation with Alpina has given birth to a stunning, fashionable and comfortable collection, which really makes me happy. We are currently working on another collection of men's leather shoes, which is expected to hit the shelves by the end of the year. There will be three new models: ankle-high boots, and mid-cut and low-cut men's shoes," said renowned Slovenian fashion designer Tomaž Draž upon the launch of the Alpina Draž collection. This means that Alpina and Draž are already thinking about new projects to come.

Alpina Draž footwear for women and men is marked by modern design, comfortable soles, and a fluid walking sensation.

All shoes are fitted with an additional volume-adjustable insole for a custom fit. Some shoes use knitted fabric as the predominant material, while others boast a combination of knitted fabric and leather. Among the models which have attracted public attention are shoes with integrated Žiri lace, which are a result of cooperation between the Draž designers and the Žiri Lace School. This marks a symbolic fusion of two important traditions of the Žiri area – shoemaking and lacemaking.

All models are available in a variety of colour and pattern combinations, featuring elegant infills, intricate patterns and bold colour combinations. The comfortable design makes them an ideal choice for all-day wear. They pair well with different outfits, from casual daily and business wear to sports and evening attire.

The cooperation between Alpina and Draž started in 2013 with the design of the Draž *Diatomeja* (spring – summer 2014) collection. With the use of laser technology, skilled workers translated the designers' ideas into leather pumps and ballerinas as well as casual 'knitted' footwear. The collection was first presented to the public at the Ljubljana Fashion Week 2014, and at four more Fashion Weeks in the following years.

"So far more than 30 Alpina Draž models have been designed. We knew that we were creating something outstanding. And our satisfied





customers have proved us right," says Majda Rezar, head of Alpina's fashion department. With 900,000 pairs of fashion shoes produced annually, they are an important part of Alpina's production.

Every season Alpina offers its buyers innovative and attractive interpretations of global fashion trends, some of them through cooperation with the Draž designers.

According to Alpina's philosophy, fashion shoes must be beautiful as well as comfortable. The Alpina Group generates EUR 58 million in sales revenue per year, and makes about 1.5 million pairs of shoes. Its fashion programme amounts to 900,000 pairs annually (86% are exported), while the sports programme totals 600,000 pairs of shoes (83% for export).

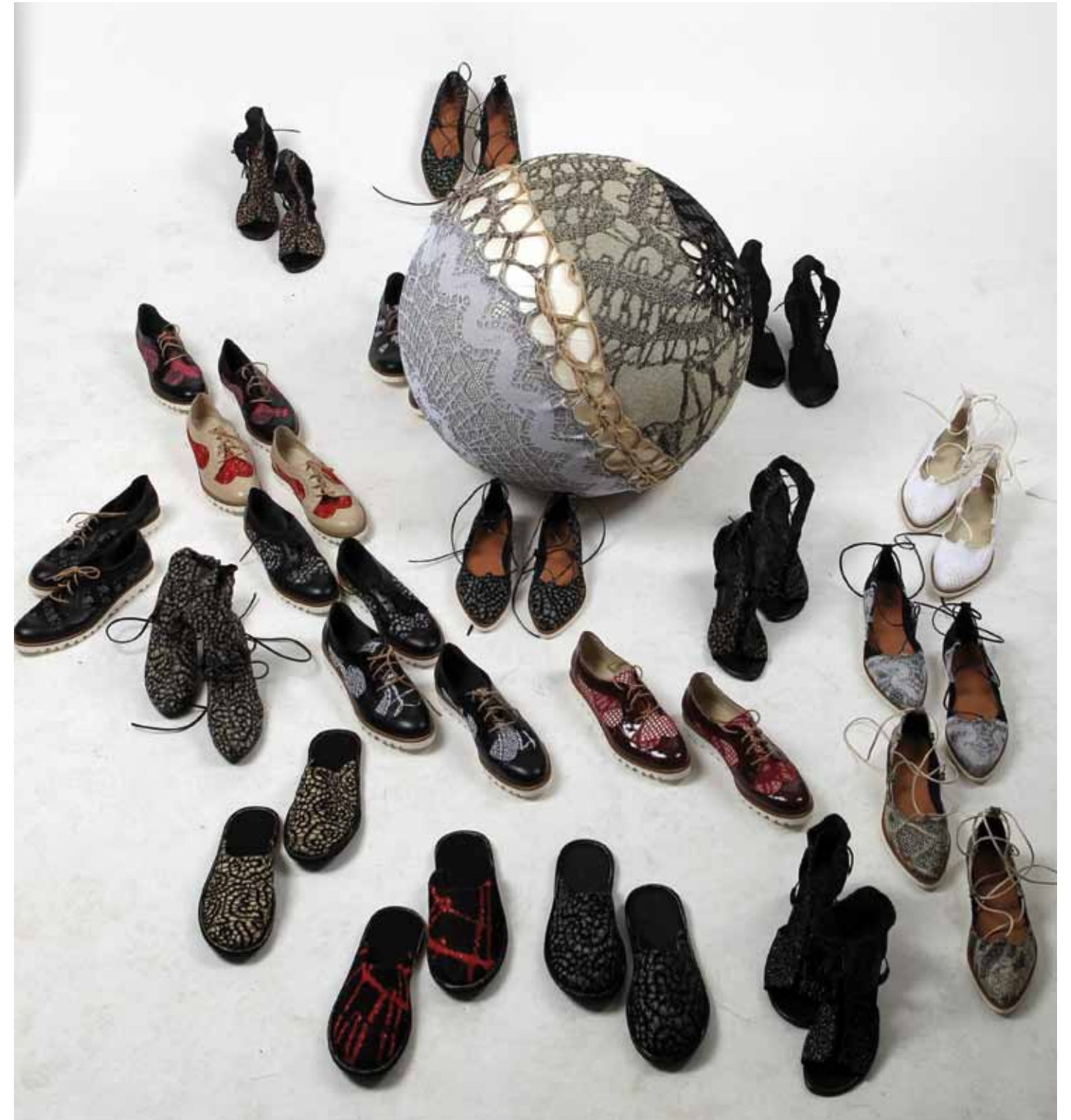
ALPINA AND DRAŽ IN BRIEF

Alpina is a progress-oriented footwear manufacturer with a long, rich and inspiring tradition. In 2017 Alpina will celebrate its 70th anniversary. The trademark is synonymous with high-quality production, innovative solutions, and practical design. Its Nordic skiing programme ranks among the leading in the world.

In addition to its central production facility and headquarters in Žiri, Slovenia, the Alpina Group operates two production plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one in China. The company employs over 1,400 people.

Draž is a family company with a long tradition. Karolina, Urška and Tomaž Draž first presented their creations to the public in 1989. Their clothes, shoes and accessories are a result of years of careful study of knitted fabrics and the coexistence between the human body, the spirit and the clothes. The Draž trademark, synonymous with a creative approach, limitless imaginative solutions, and top-notch expertise, has been of huge influence in Slovenia's contemporary fashion industry.

All shoes in the collection are available from Alpina's online shop.
www.alpinashop.si



12TH SLOVENIAN BIENNIAL OF ILLUSTRATION

“The image of the book, the book of images”

OLGA BUTINAR ČEH,
ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIAN FINE ARTISTS SOCIETIES



12. Slovenski bienale ilustracije

12th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration

The Slovenian Biennial of Illustration reflects the impressive development of book illustrations over the last 30 years. A total of 67 illustrators will present their work at the exhibition at Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana on 21st December.

THE BIENNIAL DATES BACK TO 1992

The Association of Slovenian Fine Artists Societies (ZDSLU) launched an initiative in 1993 to promote Slovenian illustrators, present their work to the public, and showcase the latest achievements in this field. That year saw the first exhibition of the Slovenian Biennial of Illustration. The event provides an opportunity for Slovenian illustrators who are widely recognised in Slovenia and abroad to develop their work, and ensure their continuous presence in Slovenia and abroad. The title of this year's event is “The image of the book, the book of images”.

The initiative was launched by the section of book illustrators within the ZDSLU, which included Irena Majcen, Marija Lucija Stupica, Danijel Demšar, Dušan Muc, Mojca Cerjak, Jelka Godec Šmidt and Matjaž Šmidt, Kamila Volčanšek, Mirna Pavlovec, Alenka Sotler and curator Judita Krivec Dragan. Cankarjev dom has lent a helping hand, with its curator and exhibition programme manager Nina Pirnat Spahić, who has been in charge of the Biennial since its beginnings, playing a key role in project organisation and exhibition set-up. Their urge to protect artistic illustration, which was under severe threat from increasing commercialisation, has evolved into an idea of a nationwide biennial of illustration. Since its beginning, the project has been financed by the Ministry of Culture. Without the ministry's support, the Biennial would have ceased long ago.

THE FIRST ILLUSTRATIONS – PREHISTORIC CAVE PAINTINGS

The true origin of illustration is rather hard to determine, although prehistoric cave paintings in many sites around the world are generally considered the earliest illustrations known to man. The ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece, Mesopotamia and Rome were already familiar with pictorial representations of events. These attempts to capture and preserve time as an image now offer fleet-

Fine art critic Judita Krivec Dragan: By giving the event a rather poetic title “The image of the book, the book of images, poet Boris A. Novak has symbolically given the Slovenian Biennial of Illustration the task of acknowledging book illustration as a form of Slovenian painting that had enjoyed a fine and long tradition and deserved a much more important role than it was given by the expert public. If anything made children's eyes sparkle in the decades following World War II, it was books for young children, and the rich and diverse accompanying illustrations. The Biennial is a living organism which may be affected by virtually any change in the contents, topicality or production of contemporary visual arts. The exhibition of the contemporary Slovenian illustration was designed as a modern and professional display of artistic production through narrative images. The organisers have kept the focus on the originality and responsiveness to changes in society and time. Today the Biennial is faced with new methods of expression, new aesthetics and, most importantly, computers and the internet, which form the reality of the youngest generations of illustrators whose works reflect the preserved ‘modus vivendi’ of such encounters. However, there is an element that connects these illustrators with their distant predecessors, even the authors of illuminated medieval manuscripts. It is the primal touch, the hidden yearning somewhere in the depth of a soul that forces an artist to create, opening the door to infinite horizons of the worlds beyond our material reality. And the imagination, of course, knows no boundaries of space or time.

ing glimpses into the past. Artists in ancient China, Japan and Korea began interpreting texts through the use of visual images as early as the 7th century. The Romanesque and Gothic periods of medieval Europe brought the rise of hand-made illuminated manuscripts. Narrative pictorials, which appeared as decorations in texts of religious and secular content, also portrayed scenes from daily life in Europe at the time (Book of Durrow, Book of Kells, Ingeborg Psalter, Belles Heures of the Duke of Berry). Unfortunately, these richly illustrated manuscripts were accessible to few people, which has changed greatly since the invention of printing in the 15th century.

Illustration is now freely available to a growing number of people and has developed into an established form of fine art.

Further proof of the important position which illustration has taken in the world of fine art is provided by the fact that buyers are willing to pay six- or seven-digit figures for original illustrations from world-renowned artists, despite the impressive abilities of state-of-the-art information systems, computers and related technology.

WHAT IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF ILLUSTRATION TODAY?

The main purpose of illustration is to translate the written word into images. At the same time, a good illustration must also function as an independent work of art. The field of illustration is vast: it can provide a synoptic or selective representation of images, disassemble and assemble objects and organisms, convey concepts that cannot be seen by the naked eye or captured by the camera, or extract textual information to enhance images. Moreover, relief-printed illustrations are among the few visual representations that can be perceived by blind and visually impaired readers.

Every single illustration carries a powerful message since a picture is worth a thousand words and illustrations can be executed in a variety of graphic and painting techniques such as drawings, linocut, woodcut, drypoint, etching, lithography, watercolour, gouache, oil, or pastel.

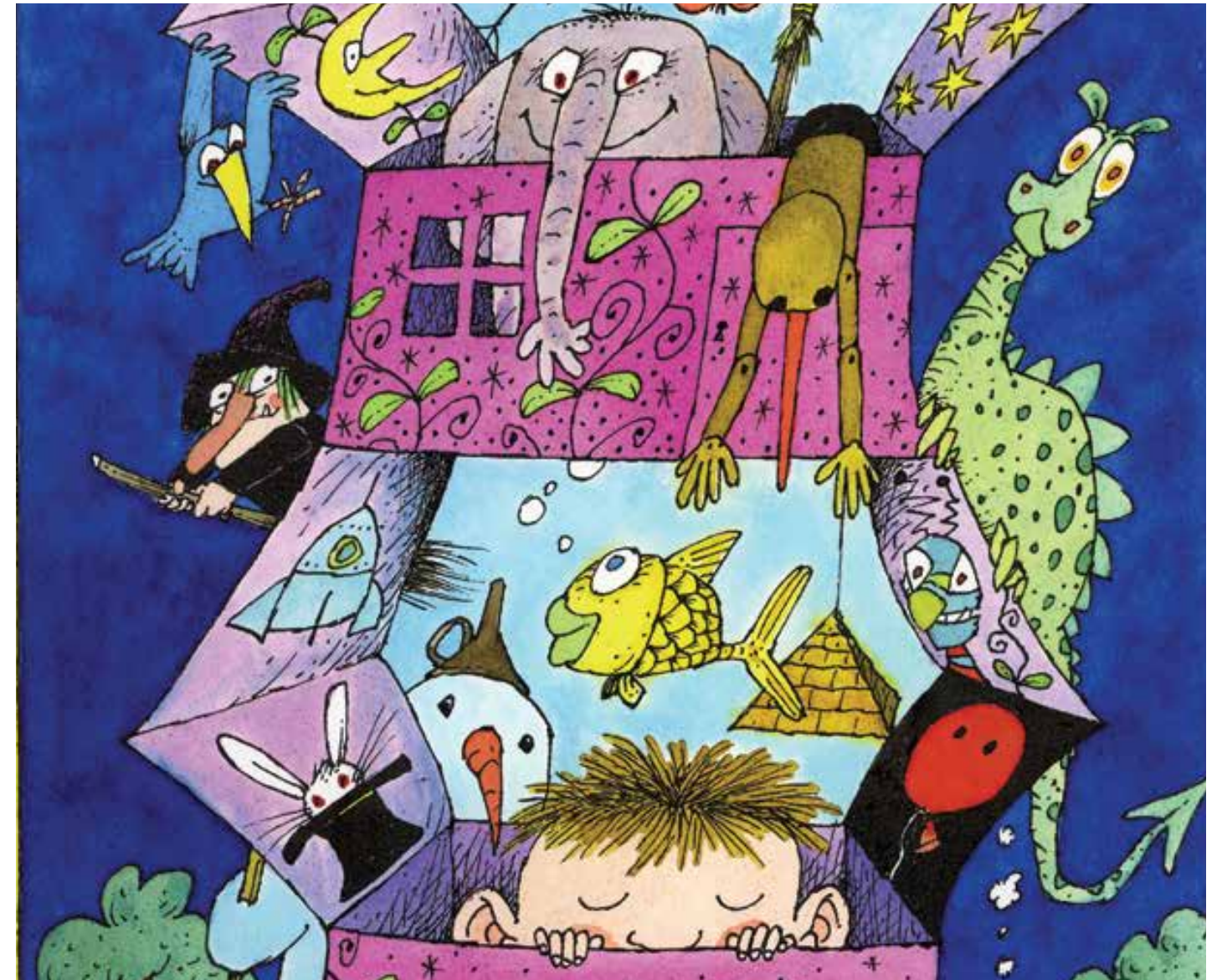
The invention of photography at the end of the 19th century seemed to threaten the leading position of illustration. The fear

was unfounded: drawings can convey precise details which may be lost in a photograph since the camera also records the surrounding environment and is permanently affected by light. Drawings create an illusion of space; they can simulate light and eliminate undesired elements, eradicate disturbing influences that restrict our observation of an object, and focus on conveying the desired image. Technological details are extremely hard to take in on the basis of written texts alone. Often an illustrator tries to capture the invisible and present an aspect that cannot be perceived differently or seen in reality.

The main goal of an illustrator is not to create a reproduction of the depicted object or an invisible process, but rather to capture its meaning.

Today illustration is commonplace in literature and periodical press, scientific and artistic texts, and in advertising and commercial representations. Appearing in a variety of interactive and other electronic media, illustration shows that it long ago rose beyond the level of book illustration. This changes the creative processes and technologies as well as fields of operation and representation. Numerous applications currently available to illustrators serve to enhance the persuasive power and clarity of interpretation as they can easily present very complex and abstract biological principles. Thus, illustration becomes a simple, schematic, dynamic and, most importantly, didactic tool suitable for different publications of scientific and general content.

Illustrations of literature translate the story and the emotions described therein into images. An illustrator's interpretation is by definition a subjective process, and the quality of illustrations lies in this personal perception that is conveyed through artistic expression and the richness of the author's imagination. Early in life, children take their first steps into the beautiful world of fine art, nature and literature through illustrations in picture books. As a form of literature, picture books are closely connected to the development of society in definition and history. These books are intended for small children, who are not able to read, and for beginner readers. Pictures are more important than written texts. Most picture books are thin and available in a variety of formats. Of course, picture books are extremely important, since it is through them that children learn to love books. With their beauty and persuasive power, illustrations lead people at a very early age into the world of science, art and culture, the world of illustration and stories.



The panel of judges is composed of: Dr. Damir Globočnik, President, and members Barbara Vurnik Sterle, Alenka Vidrgar, Prof. Lucijan Bratuš and Nina Pirnat Spahič as the representative of Cankarjev dom. The award-winning illustrators will receive the Hinko Smrekar Award, the highest national prize in the field of illustration. The 12th Biennial Life Achievement Award went to the outstanding Slovenian book illustrator, cartoonist and animator Marjan Manček, for his humorous interpretations of stories and characters for young and adult readers.



NEUE SLOWENISCHE KUNST (NSK) EXHIBITS IN MOSCOW

From Ljubljana's Museum of Modern Art to the „Garage“

ANDREJA BRUSS, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
PHOTO: ALEXEY NARODITSKIY, GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The first major survey show of the Slovenian art collective called Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), organised by Ljubljana's Museum of Modern Art and staged last year in the capital, is now on view at one of the most eminent contemporary art venues in Moscow.

SYMBOLIC COMEBACK

In the early 1990s, the NSK collective started an intense relationship with the Moscow art scene, which, in 1992, resulted in organisation of the NSK Moscow Embassy – a month-long series of lectures and debates on the topic of “How the East sees the East” – as part of the “NSK State in Time.”

Its exhibition in Moscow twenty-four years later can thus be seen as a symbolic “return.”

Now on show to modern art enthusiasts in Russia, the display was prepared by Slovenian curator Zdenka Badovinac, who is the director of the Museum of Modern Art. Art experts in Russia consider the exhibition, which will remain open until 9 December, as one that deftly combines all borderlines and forms of artwork created by the artists who are united under the Collective, i.e. paintings, posters, music videos, vinyl records, theatre performance videos and photographs.

The preview of the exhibition, which was part of the opening of the autumn season at the Garage, was attended by the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia Anton Peršak and the Ambassador of Slovenia to Moscow Primož Šeligo.

The opening was also attended by the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia Anton Peršak, who, together with his Russian colleague Vladimir Medinsky, signed an agreement on cooperation in culture between Russia and Slovenia. In the following two years, Slovenia will further strengthen its efforts in establishing cultural ties with Russia. Upon signing the agreement, Minister Peršak expressed his satisfaction and emphasised that visits planned in both states will further upgrade the already long-standing and well-established tradition of mutual respect and cooperation.

NEUE SLOWENISCHE KUNST COLLECTIVE

The Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) collective was founded in 1984 by three groups – the multimedia group called Laibach (formed in 1980), the IRWIN visual arts group (formed in 1983) and the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater (1983–1987). At the same time, the three groups founded a fourth group – the design department named the New Collectivism. Later on, NSK established other depart-

ments, i.e. the Department of Pure and Applied Philosophy, Retro-vision, Film, and Builders.

NSK FROM KAPITAL TO CAPITAL

Similarly as the Ljubljana edition, the Moscow exhibition follows the work of the three founding groups and the five departments. The central section of the exhibition looks at the key themes the groups critically examined together.

This retrospective exhibition of the NSK collective is placed within the economic and sociopolitical context of the 1980s, a turbulent decade that preceded the collapse of the old world order and heralded the ever-increasing reach of capitalism. All too often the work of NSK is associated exclusively with the context of the failing Yugoslavia and socialism, accompanied by a general disregard for the power of the collective’s artistic faculty, its reflection on broader global processes, and its fundamental goal to construct a new artistic constellation that would allow them to enter the larger international dialogue in their own right.

In the final decade of Yugoslavia, NSK was no less a critic of the emerging global capitalism than of the outgoing socialism, in which respect it differed both notably and essentially from the liberal critique of socialism.

In 1991, the Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung (successor of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre and the Cosmokinetic Theatre Rdeči pilot) staged a production entitled *Kapital*; in 1991, IRWIN published a book and staged an exhibition named *Kapital*; and in 1992, Laibach released an album entitled *Kapital*. With these projects, the three core NSK groups marked the end of ideology and a beginning of total capitalism, which many today still see as a system without a viable alternative. Unlike the prevalent postmodern art that resigned itself to a society that did not boast a bright future, NSK had established itself as an alternative institution and an alternative state in both the concrete and abstract sense of the word. The three *Kapital* projects each in its own way continued the artistic explorations of the three core NSK groups, using the complex language of art to draw attention to the complex, multifaceted and highly diverse character of capital.

THE ART OF NSK

The art of NSK could be compared to such international trends as appropriation art, institutional critique, and relational art, though these descriptions fail to encompass a crucial difference, one that NSK safeguarded coining its own terms for what it was doing. NSK countered the postmodern art of the 1980s with its retro method, laying bare the ideological manipulation with images: Laibach with the retro-avant-garde, the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre with the retro-garde, and IRWIN with the retro principle. NSK differed from the Western appropriation art in that it appropriated, with its events, the state and state institutions; it differed from the familiar paradigms of institutional critique by arriving at the conclusion that there was actually nothing to criticize since both the state and the institutions first needed to be constructed; and it differed from usual relational art by the NSK events in the early 1990s already involving the participation of others who wanted to see radical changes in the art system and who shared the same sense and set of urgencies regarding the Eastern European cultural space within the new circumstances.

The NSK principle has been embodied, from the very outset, in the German name of the Collective, meaning the New Slovenian Art.

And alluding to both “Junge slovenische Kunst”, the title of a special issue of the German avant-garde journal *Der Sturm* from 1929 featuring young Slovenian art, as well as to the trauma that emerged out of more than a thousand years of German political and cultural hegemony inflicted upon the small Slovenian nation. The “new national art” presented itself both as an international, i.e., capable of entering the international art arena, and as a cultural product of a small nation that can only thrive once it recognizes its inherent eclecticism based on and in relation to Eastern and Western cultural influences.

What can we draw from this, what lessons can be learned from NSK that could also be of use today? At a first glance, the NSK fusion of mutually exclusive symbols appears to have become an essential part of contemporary imagery. On the one hand, we are witnesses to a process of complete symbolic depletion, and on the other, to the reactivation of symbols. Today, this game of symbols is becoming uncomfortably similar to that of the dubious 1980s, making the NSK tradition more topical than ever.



SLOVENIA'S FLOURISHING ARTS & CRAFTS

Skilled hands and a creative spirit

SOURCE: CHAMBER OF CRAFTS AND SMALL BUSINESS OF SLOVENIA



The intricate handmade patterns that adorn the Dražgoše honeybread biscuits have earned these a special place among figurative and ornamental honeybread products. Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Europe is increasingly recognising the intrinsic value of creative activity with a regional flavour. These artistic pursuits are collectively referred to as arts and crafts. The term encompasses a variety of knowledge and skills, masterful command of primary materials, as well as original artistic creations of great value which enhance the quality of our existence, and life in general, through their use of materials, originality, or the message they communicate.

SLOVENIA'S ARTS & CRAFTS

People have always relied on handicrafts for survival and income. Handcrafting of wooden products for everyday domestic use has grown into a commercial activity which is known in Slovenia as 'suha roba', or woodwork. Slovenia's woodwork tradition originates from the areas around Ribnica and Kočevje, although individual or small-series production of certain wood products also flourished in several other craft clusters. A local or regional pattern is also observed in the locations of pottery centres, whose signature types and variations of pottery products reflected the general taste of their customers and their lifestyles. Until the early 20th century, the most recognised craftsmen were weavers, in particular those from the area between Kranj and Škofja Loka as they made top-quality flax and hemp linen. Linen was the most popular material for making sails for ships in the Adriatic Sea. In the Middle Ages, clusters of smithies and nail-making workshops grew in certain areas in Gorenjska, e.g. in Kropa and Kamna Gorica, from where nails and other wrought iron products were carried on horseback to markets near and far.

'PISANICE' FROM BELA KRAJINA – A NATURAL SYMBOL OF FERTILITY

According to the Christian tradition, eggs symbolise the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and have therefore found their way into the Easter traditions of all nations influenced by Christianity. Wax-resist techniques were traditionally used for decorating Easter eggs in many parts of Slovenia, but this traditional design, as well as ornaments, has mainly been preserved in Bela krajina. In this area, richly decorated Easter eggs are called 'pisanice' ('pisati' is Slovene

for 'write') because wax ornaments are drawn, or 'written', on eggs with a special pen-like tool which is used to melt the wax over the candle of a flame. Ornaments in the colour of eggshell are made first, and then followed by other dyes. After each application, working in layers from lighter to darker hues, wax is used again to cover the parts of the eggshell on which ornament details will be made.

BAGS AND BASKETS MADE OF MAIZE HUSKS

Maize husks are used to weave baskets and bags of different sizes. The products are made from the husks of a local variety of home-grown maize and are completely natural. Corn husk baskets are very useful products, intended for families who appreciate local crafts. Small bags are popular decorative products. The making of maize husk products requires a lot of patience and love. Each product is unique and therefore even more original.

DRAŽGOŠKI KRUKKI – HONEYBREAD DELIGHTS

Some experts believe that figurative and ornamental honeybread biscuits spread to the countryside under the influence of certain monasteries. The Ursuline Sisters in Ljubljana used to shape and bake honey-based 'poprovci' cookies until World War II. Honeybread bakeries in towns made these biscuits by pressing honey-based dough into wooden moulds hand-carved by craftsmen from the area of Dražgoše or Škofja Loka. The oldest and most original shapes are decorated hearts and semi-circles, which boys and girls would exchange on the Epiphany. The Epiphany used to be considered a holiday for young maidens since the Three Wise Men were believed to be successful matchmakers.



Eggs are an ancient Indo-European symbol of spring and a natural symbol of fertility and rebirth of nature.
Photo: Dunja Wedam



The beginning of tobacco pipe making dates back to the 18th century.
Photo: Tourism Bohinj

TOBACCO PIPES FROM GORJUŠE

The craft flourished in the area of Bohinj, in particular in the village of Gorjuše and its surroundings. Pipes were made mostly of pear-wood or several other types of wood and then inlaid with mother-of-pearl, pearl shell, or silver ornaments. Pipemaking was a seasonal activity which men engaged in during late autumn and winter to earn additional income. At its peak, several thousand pipes were made and sold not only in Slovenia and other provinces of Austria-Hungary, but also in England and America. A report from the early 20th century states that the Gorjuše pipemakers carved 3000 to 3500 pipes every year. The most popular design was the hefty 'čedra,' which became known under its original name even abroad.

ACCORDIONS

Accordion production and playing is of relatively recent origin. However, since the second half of the 19th century the popularity of the instrument has evolved rapidly into a creative movement and craft. After World War II accordion playing grew to unforeseen dimensions. It soon became an essential element of the mass culture phenomenon known as Slovenian national folk music. Before that, the accordion was primarily used by music makers performing in villages and small towns at various public gatherings and events. Before the rise in the instrument's popularity, the main instruments used by village musicians were the dulcimer and zither. In Slovenia, accordions were produced by many craftspeople and craft workshops. Through technological innovations and specific sound designs, these workshops have gradually created a range of feature- or workshop-specific instruments. The diatonic button accordion, or 'frajtonarica' in Slovene, is currently the most popular type of the instrument.

STONE MASONRY – SHAPES TORN FROM EARTH

Masonry products include window frames, door portals and other construction elements, troughs and bowls, stone tables placed under mighty tree tops, and other stone-containing implements and containers used in viticulture and wine-making, oil production, and certain other crafts. Stone was also used to make certain tools and containers which were indispensable in the cooking, or preserving, of food. The fields of application of natural stone were most diverse in the Mediterranean and near the sea, primarily in the Karst, where stone was so important that it should be capitalised.

WROUGHT-IRON CRAFT - MYSTERIOUS MEN WHO CAN TAME FIRE

Blacksmiths enjoy a respected position in Slovenia's heritage. These men worked with fire, but were also entrusted with other tasks, such as inspecting slaughtered meat, and treating sick people and animals. Blacksmiths knew certain technological procedures that were unknown to most men, which earned them general respect. Within the general concept of metal handicrafts, these craftsmen were either tool makers or farriers. Another profession that should be added to the previous two is artist blacksmith. Artist blacksmiths were able to carry out demanding procedures to make metal furniture and decoration for homes and public areas. Another feature of blacksmiths is that they need plenty of tools, which each young blacksmith had to make for himself before he could start developing his craft and become a master craftsman.

LECTAR HEARTS – STIRRING MEMORIES AND MAKING LOVE SHINE

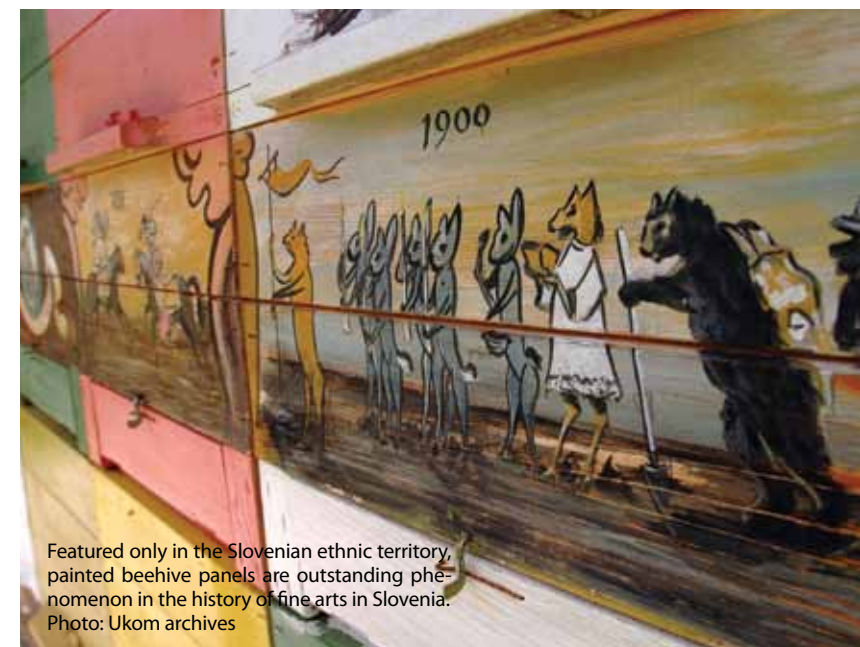
Honey-based dough is manually pressed into handmade moulds and the biscuits are then baked or air-dried. When baked or dry, the biscuits are dyed and glazed with coloured sugar icing. Dried biscuits can be decorated with pictures, tiny mirrors, and messages about love and various other subjects. Figurative lectar biscuits shaped like little horses, dolls, or birds mark the pinnacle of this craft, with lectar hearts as a symbol of love, joy, and celebration proudly taking the lead. Lectar hearts are considered a token of heart-felt wishes and are perfect gifts for anniversaries, birthday parties, and weddings.

PAPER FLOWERS – THEY WILL NEVER DIE

Up until the end of World War II, the craft of making paper flowers flourished in the countryside. Most commonly, these flowers were made from crepe streamers or special flower paper. In certain areas paper flowers were waxed for better durability and resistance. These artificial flowers were used to make funeral wreaths and cross garlands, as well as wedding bouquets and floral wreaths, and bouquets for soldiers and newly ordained priests. Making flowers out of silk, or any other type of textile, was particularly popular in towns as a more sophisticated form of the traditional craft. In all-white wedding bouquets certain rules had to be followed: the bride and groom both wore button holes, the bride also



The art of making bobbin lace, which has a tradition in Slovenia dating back to the 17th century, has been declared intangible heritage of national importance.
Photo: Video Coppo di Marco Coppo



Featured only in the Slovenian ethnic territory, painted beehive panels are outstanding phenomenon in the history of fine arts in Slovenia.
Photo: Ukom archives



Over the centuries, trading in 'suha roba,' or woodenware, has assumed international dimensions.
Photo: Janja Žagar/SEM archives

had a floral wreaths in her hair and a wedding bouquet. Button-holes for the best man and maid of honour were slightly smaller in size, while other members of the wedding party only wore a single blossom.

WICKER BASKETS – WEAVING FOR USEFULNESS

Basket weaving is the most widespread traditional craft still practised in Slovenia. Its popularity is not due to specific craft preservation measures, but rather due to the practicality and usefulness of these 'evergreen' products. The diversity of Slovenia's natural environment offers a variety of primary materials, i.e. different types of plant stalks, which skilled weavers can turn into baskets, boxes and other products. Along with slender willow and hazel stems or splints, common basketry materials also include straw, clematis, maize husks, as well as chestnut, spruce, dogwood, and other trees and shrubs. The basketry tradition in Slovenia is highly diverse; a combination of local self-taught craftspeople and focused handicraft pursuits, based on skills acquired through basketry courses and schools.

PAINTED BEEHIVE PANELS

The practice of decorating, or marking, beehives with a series of ornamental, religious, humorous, historical and everyday motifs can be followed from the mid-18th century to the early 20th century, when changes in beekeeping practices led to the demise of this form of folk art. Slovenia's heritage of beehive panels consists of over 600 motifs adorning at least 50,000 beehive front panels. Sadly, only 3000 such beehive panels have been preserved and are now stored in museums and private collections. The motifs are predominantly figurative, secular in nature. Motifs which illustrate human flaws and reduce various professions were among the most popular.

'REMENKE' – EASTER EGGS FROM PREKMURJE

The Prekmurje tradition of making 'remenke' or 'remenice' spans over one hundred years. The complex batik technique that uses three dyes – white, red, and black – has only been preserved in Dobrovnik. Several types of Easter eggs are made, but typical Prekmurje ornaments in batik continue to be the most popular. Before eggs are dyed, archaic ornate patterns and foliage ornaments are



Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

drawn on them in molten wax using a stylus. This special wax-resistant technique is also used with lace-based patterns, and followed by drilling and polishing.

Today 'remenke' are mainly a lovely souvenir from the Prekmurje region. The tradition has been kept alive in Goričko, Easter eggs from this area feature a diversity of floral ornaments and wheat stalks. Another peculiar feature of 'remenke' is a rosette pattern on the upper and lower end of the egg. Other motifs expressing creativity and imagination can also be used.

CRADLES – ROCKING INTO LIFE

By the first half of the 20th century, most newborn babies in the countryside had been rocked into life lying in cradles. To this day, cradles continue to be understood as a symbol of birth. An overview of the history of cradles shows that this rocking furniture element as a product of self-taught or workshop-trained craftsmen was relatively late to come into common use. It became relatively widespread in the 19th century. At that time, most cradles were painted with symbols, religious motifs, floral ornaments, and geometric patterns. In most cases, ornate designs were a continuation of the Baroque tradition. The list of popular motifs included a four- or five-pointed star, or 'monna taca,' which was painted on the shorter side of the cradle. According to ancient folk beliefs, this symbol protected the baby from the harmful influences of nightmares.

WOODEN-SPOON HOLDERS – 'SUHA ROBA,' ONE OF THE OLDEST SLOVENIAN TRADEMARKS

The rich selection of products, which has varied through the years, has always included wooden spoons and spoon holders. These were actually designed as wall-mounted wooden holders or storage boxes for spoons and other eating utensils. The origin of these wall racks remains unclear. The oldest specimens found date back to the 17th century although it was only in the 19th century that woodenware came into common use in towns and in the countryside. At this time, woodenware was no longer crafted exclusively by carpenters; products were often made and decorated by self-taught artists, in particularly during winter months. Several variations and artistic designs were created, and spoon holders often included carved, inlaid or painted decorations.



Slovenia's heritage is rich in the use of stone, which was modified into various shapes by the skilled hands of stonecutters and masons.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



Honeybread and candle making are traditional crafts that can be traced back more than 1300 years. Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

BARBARA K. GERM

Glass jewellery designer

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: ARCHIVES OF BKG



Her glass jewellery is unique and impressive. Few people pass her little studio in Stari trg in the centre of Ljubljana without stopping to take a closer look at the myriad of sparkling glass necklaces, rings and bracelets designed and hand-made by Barbara K. Germ.

The tradition of artistic glassblowing passed down to her because of the sudden death of her father, but she soon realised that glass was her calling in life and her daily joy. Ever since she has been designing, making and selling jewellery which has earned the admiration of the local population as well as the crowds of tourists who have been swarming around the city in recent years. Colourful glass balls, droplets, hollow spheres and filaments add an artistic quality to the appearance of those who wear them. For that reason, she has never had difficulty selling her work.

Barbara K. Germ loves living and working in Slovenia. She is particularly excited by the groups of tourists who step into her tiny shop to compliment her on her innovative and quality creations. They are also impressed by the city, though.

Tourists see Ljubljana as an elegant city that can easily compete with all major European tourist destinations.

They appreciate the country's strategic position, which is ideal for city breaks. Ljubljana is a calm and safe place, they say, but also one that has a lot going on - in terms of culture as well as cuisine.

When asked about plans to expand her business, Barbara K. Germ says she maintains close contacts abroad and has received many offers of work but wishes her business to stay small and exclusive. She does not want to expand, as that would mean that more women would be wearing her products. As a jeweller, she manages to maintain her exclusivity, something that her customers appreciate.

She is also afraid that mass production might take away the thrill of creation. "I might start thinking like a manager, and I don't want that," she says.

"I love fashion, arts, sport, I enjoy all of them; that's who I am." Her jewellery emanates her sophisticated sense of aesthetics. "Glass is my destiny, and glass jewellery is a coincidence which has turned out to be much more than just a good business idea." It is my way of life. My parents started our family tradition of glassmaking. After my father's sudden death in 1994, the family business fell onto my shoulders. It was not easy. One day my 12-year-old daughter asked me to make her some earrings. First I refused, saying I had no time, but she insisted and so I set about making a pair of earrings. That

was the beginning of BKG glass jewellery, a story that now spans nearly 13 years.

Ljubljana has practically no history of glassmaking, although Slovenia has some famous glass factories and a glassworks school, which Barbara attended. All her products are made of high-quality JENA glass, used for laboratory products. It is extremely hard, less prone to breaking and has a melting point of 1600°C. When this temperature is reached above an open fire, the forming of the glass mass can begin. This is done with pincers, graphite rods, special scissors and other instruments. The glass mass is then formed into end products such as vases, candle holders, animal figurines and jewellery. Whether creative ideas are born spontaneously or carefully planned, they always require a lot of good will and a great deal of effort.

Her father, Franc Germ, an arts and crafts master, was a pioneer of artistic glassblowing in Slovenia. Barbara is now continuing this 30-year tradition of glassmaking. In her studio she cuts glass and shapes it into vases or glasses as well as pieces that form part of her unique jewellery. Her creations appear in Slovenian fashion magazines and on television shows. She also takes part in fashion shows and charity events. All BKG products are handmade originals and bear the certificate of the Slovene Trade Chamber. In 2004, B.K.GERM shop won the MY SHOP (MOJA TRGOVINA) award for its quality of service, product range, and the layout of the shop.



Slovenian ceramics artists excel in Barcelona

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: V-UGLJE INSTITUTE ARCHIVES

The presence of Slovenian ceramics artists at the world's biggest ceramics congress has been hailed as an unprecedented success for Slovenia.



At the international call for exhibitors published by the Association of Catalan Ceramists (ACC) and the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC), Slovenia's V-ogljje Institute was selected for participation in the group exhibition. In this, Slovenian artists presented their creations alongside artists from Australia, New Zealand and Israel. In the exhibition taking place from 7 September to mid-October, 28 carefully selected creators presented their work at the prestigious Sant Pau Recinte Modernista palace in Barcelona.

At the Opening Ceremony, more than 400 invited guests, including the honorary consul for Israel and New Zealand, were addressed by Slovenian Ambassador Renata Cvelbar Bek. Niko Zupan, representative of the V-ogljje Institute spoke on behalf of the Slovenian exhibition organiser. He thanked the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) and Ministry of Culture for their support for enabling this presentation of Slovenian art. The catalogue which presented the artists and the attractions of Slovenia was accompanied by a 12-minute

documentary. According to the organisers, the exhibition was seen by 18,000 visitors.

The International Academy of Ceramics based in Geneva, Switzerland, was founded in 1952 with the aim of bringing together ceramics artists from all over the world. Today it is the leading organisation in the field and a UNESCO-affiliated partner. The Academy brings together artists, universities, ceramics centres, museums and galleries, curators, gallerists and collectors, who meet biennially at a General Assembly and Congress, which feature a World Meeting and accompanying events. Such gatherings were already held in Santa Fe (USA- 2010), Paris (2012), Dublin (2014), Barcelona (2016), Taipei (Taiwan -2018), Georgia, Finland, and Switzerland (2020). Upon the closing of the exhibition, 22 Slovenian artists donated their Barcelona exhibits to the Pottery Museum of Argentina's permanent collection of world ceramics.



SLOVENIAN CHILDREN COOK LIKE THEIR GREAT-GRANDMOTHERS

Culinary tradition as part of cultural heritage

ANKA PELJHAN
PHOTO: IGOR ZAPLATIL



Do you remember your great-grandmother's recipes, or those of old village cooks, and flavours from your childhood? Do you know why some dishes were only for special occasions and others were part of everyday meals, even if always in a slightly different form? And how do you put together a tasty meal using only local and seasonal ingredients, maybe gathered from around your home?

Children from selected Slovenian primary schools set themselves the challenge to prepare dishes of their predecessors in a modern way. By exploring their culinary heritage, they want to raise awareness among their own generation and that of their parents. Through the media, they also want to spread their knowledge to a broader public in Slovenia and abroad. Based on six years of work to revitalise culinary culture, in which more than 2,000 primary school children have been involved each year.

The Traditional Slovene Breakfast project is being upgraded in the current school year under the auspices of a new campaign called Dober tek Slovenija – Enjoy your meal Slovenia!

PRESERVING CULINARY RICHES

In addition to concern for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, striving to preserve the culinary characteristics of each individual region belongs amongst one of the fundamental motives of humanity. The aggression of globalism in this area is extremely strong and is reflected in the attitude of the younger generation towards local food and, consequently, in the general culture of living, where the eating occupies one of the main positions. The intention of the project is to have a long-term influence on the thinking of young people about their diets, to encourage them to consume healthy local food, to discourage them from reaching for ready-prepared dishes and, through fun activities, to enjoy being creative in the kitchen and spread information about healthy food among their own generation. By taking small steps, the project aims to increase the awareness of all those involved in the process of feeding children, to provide understandable causes and consequences of enjoying healthy food, and make such foods part of children's daily lives.

The aim of the project is to equip primary school children, who are in the most effec-

tive period in terms of perceiving essential information, for a safe and responsible way of life.

Grown-ups can contribute and be information providers, whilst children generally, with their own views and acquired knowledge, can be important in shaping not only the grown-up world but also in the introduction of other content in everyday and occasional meals.

Where is the origin and what are the reasons that typically local dishes were created in a given period, in relation to village initiatives or the resourcefulness of cooks? Where is the connection of dishes with occupations and habits – be it the working, peasant or bourgeois population? Among these we include religious or secular holidays, pre- or post-festive periods, jubilees and peasant weddings, births or deaths, the start and successful end of work done in the fields, in vineyards and forests, typical Sunday lunches or everyday dishes. A necessary consequence of the emergence of typically local dishes can be perceived in locally recognised harvested or processed ingredients. Some of these are branded (with certificates) with the traditional or geographical origin which, in a case of 'culinary awakening', is becoming synonymous with certain regions, both in the area of development of the production of local food, and in maintaining health, jobs and tourism, which are among the most rapidly developing industries. These are simple dishes, reflected in the poverty of the population and resourcefulness of cooks who, using rare ingredients, conjured up nutritious and flavourful everyday meals.

We shouldn't measure Slovenia according to its size in square metres, but rather the geographical, and consequential climatic and cultural diversity of its landscape, where each type of cuisine is unique.

Through the six-year exploration of their own food and cultural heritage by Slovenian primary school children, they were re-introduced to over 1200 dishes which the majority of the younger generation no longer know.

MOTIVATING THE YOUNG – TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The children have been entrusted with an extremely important role. They use their excellent culinary skills to create visually appealing dishes which are then presented to acclaimed food experts at major culinary and cultural events both in Slovenia and abroad. As young ambassadors of their primary school, their generation and, above all, their region or Slovenia as a whole, they are acquainting the public and attracting domestic and foreign guests. They realise that such dishes could also be a reason to visit a particular place or region, and that this is an important part of the project. The target group – primary school children – are considered to be the most susceptible in absorbing the aforementioned points which, in the long-term, they will know how to appreciate and in doing so preserve the specifics of Slovenia's culinary recognition. If children are offered such content in suitable ways, it takes only a short journey to achieve good results. Thus, in an organisational context, the project has been seen to be 'children friendly', since in competitive activities they acquire experience at numerous workshops held by producers of typically local ingredients or dishes.

They learn how to clean and prepare fish, how yoghurt and curd cheese is formed, how to use herbs in cookery in innovative ways, they practice manual dexterity by making Idrija 'žlikrofi' or Kobarid 'štruklji', they enter the kitchens of renowned chefs who open wide their doors and share their secrets with the children.

The project has been designed to integrate knowledge from various fields such as history, culture, geography, health, aesthetics, cookery, and craftsmanship. Not only high-achieving pupils but also those with lower educational achievements find motivation and in doing so strengthen their own self-esteem. More self-confident, they are also more successful in other areas as well as in overcoming the fear of various challenges in life. Fostering intergenerational communication and cooperation between groups of young people leads to socialisation, accepting others, the surroundings and ourselves. A healthy and responsible way of living becomes natural. Through motivational processes and peer influences we can ensure long-term retention of knowledge and experience, a desire to change or expand taste and the use of local ingredients. Simultaneously, we encourage a broadening of horizons of thinking about professions or 'What would I like to become,' thus ensuring the existence and upgrading of rural industries.

STUFFED BOŠTANJ VOŠČENKA APPLES

This fruit is found in almost every region in Slovenia. It was indispensable in the majority of dishes of our ancestors.

Apples can be found in strudels, cakes, in porridge or other substantial dishes, in stews - especially combined with beans - dried or as jams, juices and other drinks.

Among the numerous varieties of apple there are also native varieties which are particular to narrow individual areas. Thus, Boštanj in the Posavje area is home to the yellow (Dolenjska) 'voščenska' apple (the name is derived from the Slovene word for wax, to illustrate the fruit's shiny, 'waxed' skin). Prior to World War II, this area had a well-known and very active association of fruit growers. One of these brought in the native type of apple which today adorns the coat-of-arms of the town of Boštanj.





MMM BEATRICE

Spellbinding Karst cuisine

PETRA LOŽAR
PHOTO: MMM BEATRICE ARCHIVES

In the Karst village of Tomaj, just a stone's throw from Trieste yet still in Slovenia, Vojka Žgavec Clemenz and Jurij Clemenz produce their own jams, chutneys and tomato salsa under the trademark Mmm Beatrice. They also hold exclusive culinary tastings, showing private groups their magical Karst cuisine. The couple believe that their customers deserve only the best – the finest quality fruit and vegetables, precision cooking, perfection in presentation, sincerity and openness in relations with their customers and guests. Cookery is not their profession (Vojka is a communications strategist and creative director, whilst Jurij is a medical doctor/business consultant in the field of international pharmaceutical and health care systems), but it is their passion and increasingly a way of life.

A JAR OF CONCENTRATED PRIMORSKA SUN AND FRUIT

The pair's culinary magic was brought about by their relocation to the Karst where, a decade ago, Vojka and Jurij set up home. They named the house 'Beatrice'. The name Beatrice is not only synonymous with an artist's muse and creative inspiration, it is also 'a bringer of joy' and connects both an active and contemplative life (*vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*).

An abundance of first-class Primorska fruit and vegetables, which locals brought them, encouraged them year by year to cook more and more types of jam. Since the quantities they were cooking began to exceed their own requirements, they began to spoil with their jams their family members and friends. It was persuasion by these initial jam enthusiasts that led Vojka and Jurij to offer their products on the market. They began in 2013 with 15 types of jam. Today they offer 29 varieties of jam as well as two types of chutney and tomato salsa.

Once they had dealt with all the red tape, they realised that their jams are very unique and of superior quality.

European laws prescribe that homemade jam need to contain only 30g of fruit per 100g of jam. For the highest quality jams – superior homemade jams – only 40g of fruit is required (only the dry substance in fruit is counted). In Beatrice jams however, there is, on

average, from 140 – 160g of fruit per 100g of product, and in some of the jams there is even well over 200g! From just one jar of Mmm Beatrice jam, six or seven jars of lower quality jam could be made, which would still rank as homemade jam.

They cook their jams, chutneys and tomato salsa for up to 24 hours. The majority of the liquid evaporates. They hand mix and cook in a maximum of two pans at the same time. For every kilogramme of fruit, they add no more than 80g of sugar, and also produce jams that are completely unsweetened but are nonetheless delicious as they are sweetened by using premium fruit and/or vegetables

Vojka and Jurij don't grow their own fruit and vegetables (they only planted rhubarb), which they see as a big advantage. They are not forced to use produce regardless of its quality, but instead every year they choose the absolute best from among two or three suppliers.

If during a certain season there is not enough fruit or vegetable of the required quality, then that year they won't produce that particular type of jam.

All fruit is from Primorska, mainly from the Karst, with some also from the Vipava valley and the Brkini area, therefore the distance from orchard to pan is very short. Only citrus fruits (oranges, mandarins, lemons) are sourced elsewhere and arrive from Sicily within

three to four days of being picked. In addition to 11 types of fruit, they also preserve four types of vegetable: beetroot, carrot, rhubarb and winter squash.

Mmm Beatrice products do not contain any preservatives, colour enhancers or flavours, or jam sugar. Therefore, only premium fruit and vegetables and no, or just a really tiny amount, of sugar. And, of course, a range of other natural extras!

MMM BEATRICE JAMS ARE NOT JUST FOR SPREADING ON BREAD AND PUTTING IN PANCAKES

They cook jams from one or more types of fruit or vegetable, and add spice to some of them. Among the additions to the jam are: cinnamon, clove, ginger, turmeric, nutmeg, marjoram, chocolate, Karst lavender, rum, and Teran. All recipes are their own and original.

In addition to classic flavours (e.g. plum, apricot, fig), there are some unusual ones. They offer culinary tastings where, in their own home, private groups are offered their jams alongside cheese, meat, and vegetable dishes. Pear, apple and turmeric jam pairs per-

fectly with chicken fillet. Beetroot, cinnamon and clove jam makes an excellent alternative to cranberry sauce with game dishes. Pears, which were first planted in Tomaj around 1920, are harvested just before frost occurs, and have Karst Teran added to them to make a superior version of a well-known Karst dessert. A teaspoon of jam made from carrots, apricots and ginger, is a perfect complement to a good goat's cheese.

MMM BEATRICE CHUTNEYS AND TOMATO SALSA

Even though chutneys have long been known and available in Europe, they are almost unknown in Slovenia. Jurij and Vojka make two types of chutney: onion and apricot. They are also proud of their tomato salsa, which is excellent in dishes such as bruschetta, soups and sauces.

SPELL-BINDING CUISINE WHICH CONNECTS

They produce their spell-binding cuisine by hand and in limited quantities. Since the pair want to offer only the finest culinary experience, they concentrate on aroma and flavour, and in doing so the quality of each and every product. In one batch they produce

only 15 to 20 jars, even though up to 120 jars of homemade jam could be made from the same amount of fruit.

In their opinion that, in addition to being good, food must also be well presented. Linen napkins, with cord tied around the neck of amorphous jars, and hand-printed, cut, punched and folded pendants – all of which takes a lot of extra time and money. But this is why their spellbinding products have landed up on the shelves of the most exclusive European delicatessens and find their way to the most demanding gourmets.

Excellent quality, original flavours, sophisticated packaging and, in particular, a lot of love for the good and beautiful – these are the principal reasons why, in just its first year, lovers of sweet things from four countries – in addition to Slovenia also Italy, Austria and Germany - are enthusing about Mmm Beatrice products.

In 2015, as the first Slovene trademark, Mmm Beatrice was invited to be among 80 of the best European culinary producers who exhibited their products at the Genuss Gipfel 2015 exhibition. This is a closed type of exhibition that always takes place during the annual general meeting of Corpus Culinario – the association of owners of private German delicatessens. Last year their unique products (jams and tomato salsa) were twice included in the protocol gifts of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. This year Mmm Beatrice has also entered Berlin's KaDeWe, the second biggest delicatessen in the world.

Jurij and Vojka recognise that, precisely due to Mmm Beatrice, they are richer for many exceptional experiences. And because special inspiring people gather around food, they have made a lot of exceptional friendships with various people from many countries around the world. For them, this is a priceless experience that Beatrice has brought them. They don't harbour a desire to expand. "We don't want to become big in terms of production. We want to maintain premium quality of each and every jar of Mmm Beatrice. We want to be involved in making each and every jar of our products. We take cooking very seriously, but these serious things must be fun and make you happy," add the couple.



A FAMOUS CAKE SHRINKS

Mini poticas are conquering Slovenia

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

As tradition goes, no holiday in Slovenia passes without potica – a cake which is traditional to this country. Christmas holidays, in particular, are not to be celebrated without true Slovenian potica.



The cake is baked in a special baking mould – potičnik – characterised by its round shape and hole in the centre. Usually, potica is a rather large cake, but thanks to young entrepreneur Janja Štrumbelj, it is now also available in a small, neat version. The idea of mini potica first came to Janja when she tried in vain to find some potica in Ljubljana coffee shops for her foreign friend to sample. "I found that opportunities for tourists to try Slovenian potica are very limited, although we proudly present it as one of the most representative traditional Slovenian dishes. I also noticed that at big banquets, large slices of potica were cut into smaller pieces, which crumbled apart, making any potica lose its brilliance, no matter how nicely it had been rolled.

I thought it would be great if potica was so small that it didn't need to be cut, which would also make it suitable to be served alongside coffee, like a croissant, for example.

By chance, I saw suitable models in a store and the idea was born."

At home, she kneaded potica dough for the first time in her life, using her mother-in-law's recipe, and started experimenting. She tested various shapes, fillings and ways of rolling small poticas, until she found the right solution. She also found the right name – le Potica (which could be translated into "a beauty"), truly appropriate for such little beauties. As she believed the product to be particularly suitable for catering, she entered into a business partnership with the Jezeršek company, which combines traditional Slovenian cuisine with the latest culinary trends.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES

"As with larger poticas, the miniature versions are made according to traditional recipes that I gathered from various sources." After testing various recipes for several months, she selected the right ones to combine the best dough and the tastiest filling. All recipes are based on natural, high-quality ingredients, as this is a precondition for authentic flavour.

She does almost everything herself – from baking to marketing. "Miniature poticas, or le Potičkas, as she named them, are par baked, which means that they are half-baked and deep-frozen im-

mediately afterwards. On request, I finish them off and pack them. The production of miniature poticas is entirely manual and takes place at the Jezeršek company. She developed the product to an extent that allows for mass production. Besides baking and selling poticas, she also devotes a lot of time and attention to packaging design, marketing, promotion and the development of products under her own "le Potica" brand.

LE POTICA – A SYNONYM FOR THE BEST SLOVENIAN POTICA

In the future, Janja Štrumbelj wishes to strengthen her business model and improve the position and visibility of the "le Potica" brand as a synonym for the best Slovenian potica. "Currently, I devote a great deal of energy to my shop, which I opened this year in Mestni trg square in Ljubljana. I intend to supplement the assortment of "le Potica" with larger poticas and include into my brand other potica-related products, such as potica baking moulds, books, cooking textiles, etc. Someday I might even open my own coffee shop where "le Potica" will be served – warm, straight from the oven."

Le Potica can also be purchased via websites and as gift packages. They can also be sent abroad, in which case their expiry date has to be taken into consideration. Hence, small poticas are not suitable for long, overseas transport. But anyway, it is better to try them out in their country of origin – Slovenia.





LESNAVESNA

Natural wood products evoke Slovenian mythology

DANILA GOLOB
PHOTO: LESNAVESNA ARCHIVES

Slovenia is a land of forests and high-quality wood. Architects and designers Eva Štrukelj and Ignacio Lopez Sola have drawn on this natural wealth to capture the beauty of nature in objects made of wood incorporating Slovenian folk motives.

The central idea behind the LesnaVesna wood products is to preserve historical tradition by adding a modern twist and using today's technology. The designers use exclusively Slovenian wood as they wish to support domestic natural resources and environment. They make handy wooden accessories and products for home as well as gifts and modular toy systems.

How did LesnaVesna start? After living abroad for quite a long time and working in a big architecture firm, Eva wanted to reinvent and remind herself where she comes from and what she stands for.

She began reading books about the abundant Slovenian ethnology and mythology and so, as she laughingly explains, LesnaVesna lurked from behind a tree, determined to spring to life.

"LesnaVesna is a restless forest fairy, who would like us to stop and be reminded of beautiful stories and old values in this conformist-like, fast paced world, if only for a moment. She epitomises the wood, she is beautiful and she radiates the poetic nature," says Eva, who describes herself as a designer, storyteller and the creative leader, while her partner Ignacio contributes invaluable work in the realization of projects and sorting out details.

REMEMBERING THE ROOTS OF FOLK TRADITION

The designers say their articles always reveal a story, a legend, a natural motive, perhaps a memory of a grandmother found when rummaging through an old chest. They make their products are custom-made for individuals and personalised so that there is concordance between the user and every piece they make.

The wood products also tell stories from the Slovenian folk tradition.

The *Dota* (Dowry) collection is inspired by an age-old tradition when every woman would collect and prepare lace for her dowry, and later on also for the dowry of her daughter. It was a social event during which wisdom was passed down from one generation to another, with plenty of laughter along the way; Eva managed to embed this into the products. "I wanted to integrate this beautiful story and the wonderful art of the fine, frail lace into wood; in time, a fine amount

of "Dowry" was created, including a plate, place mats, coasters and a box, i.e. a chest, where you can store everything into a big puzzle of life."

The *Pisanice* (Easter Painted Eggs) collection was created in an effort to pay homage to the treasure of ornaments which used to be omnipotent in architecture and clothing, but can only be seen on Easter Eggs today. The traditional ornament was transferred into a modern-shaped products made of wood – a collection of wooden boards. It turns out that people love ornaments and they want to have them on other pieces of furniture too, which Eva now designs custom-made upon request.

The *Lepa misel* (Nice Thought) coasters are a reference to the old custom of giving your loved one an embroidered handkerchief. The coasters full of holes carry a message: "I present to you this gift because you are on my mind."

The *Doma doma* (Home Home) collection is comprised of pendants, magnets and brooches with typical Slovenian motives, such as the linden tree, Mount Triglav, a dragon, the potica cake, stork, bear, the Water Man etc., with a funny description added in two languages.



Architect and designer Eva Štrukelj.

The LesnaVesna products can be purchased at the shop.lesnavesna.com online store, and a part of the programme can be seen at the Slovenika and Ika stores in Ljubljana. Most often, potential buyers contact Eva directly when they want a custom-made, personalised item.

There is also an increasing number of inquiries made when people want an innovative, custom-made and large-scale item.

“The motives traditionally found on small objects were transferred to modern garden furniture, a book shelf, a big chest for children, interior furniture, the concept of a house, hotel etc.,” says Eva adding that LesnaVesna is slowly but surely expanding. The designers will soon open their own studio. They wish that the place would come alive in its full potential, working with other designers and workshops, offering numerous experiences and meeting expectations for new products by establishing a direct contact with customers.



The wooden trees in different sizes are lovely decorations, encouraging creativity and child play.

WOODEN TREES FOR WINTER DAYS

Eva and Ignacio also design wooden Christmas trees out of beechwood panels. They are called *Forest Walk* (Gozdni sprehod), *Snow Cloud* (Snežni oblček) and *Winter Flower* (Zimska roža), and each is unique in its own way. Eva's favourite is the Forest Walk tree, because of the animals which can be inserted in the openings and the playfulness that the tree invokes. The Snow Cloud and the Winter Flower are smaller trees which can be put on a table, hung from the ceiling or placed to stand alone. All trees are hand-sanded and painted using natural oils containing a touch of essential oil. The time right before the holidays is one of the busiest periods for the two designers

since many people want LesnaVesna gifts at the last moment. However, the creators never forget to decorate their own home: “It is a very good thing that our Christmas trees are so simple to put up and have no expiration date. Our home will be decorated with the first wooden trees we made, both our children will scatter the *Forest Walk* wooden animals all over the house and fight each other who will get a hold of them first :), I will be drawing coloured ribbons through the holes in the trees when I have a moment to spare, and perhaps my oldest son will contribute a paper ornament or jot a wish down on paper to hang it on the tree,” says Eva through laughter, adding that it is not important for a home to be aesthetically perfect, but rather to have the right content.



LesnaVesna draws ideas and inspirations from a treasury of folk art.

XMAS3

A Hand-crafted Wooden Tree in Harmony with Nature

DANILA GOLOB
PHOTO: TADEJ MALIGOJ



Xmas3 blends perfectly into green Slovenia. This Christmas tree is not dug up from the ground, or made of plastic; it is a natural, reusable, hand-made tree fabricated entirely from Slovenian wood.

The Xmas3 was created and made by Slovenian designer Rada Kos, who draws inspiration from natural materials and a love for nature. This Christmas tree is hand-crafted from superior-quality Slovenian wood. It can be assembled and disassembled in a matter of minutes, and then neatly stored in a box until the next festive season.

As Rada Kos says, the first Xmas3 was the result of a home experiment. Rada's family had been looking for the perfect Christmas tree for years. Even today, her son Filip complains that a few years ago Rada replaced a traditional Christmas tree with a dried tree she had brought home from the forest and adorned with ornaments. She admits that the dried tree was succeeded by an artificial version because no one in the family was willing to vacuum up needles every day. "The idea of the Xmas3 had been maturing in my head for a few years. Four years ago, having failed to reach an agreement about what our family's Christmas tree should be like, I drew a sketch on the back of a receipt and took it to Slovenijales to have the wooden pieces cut to size. Then my boys drilled holes into the trunk at home, we made the stand, and the first Xmas3 was born. Of course, I could not have imagined at the time that I was on the brink of an extraordinary story." Rada's friends and family loved the unusual Christmas tree and soon she started thinking about launching the product on the market. The tree was redesigned and reworked, and its visual image was finalised with the help of Rada's husband Tadej, an architect. The first Xmas3 was 190cm high. In reply to market demands, the tree is now also available in three smaller-sized versions, measuring 45cm, 75cm and 125cm in height.

XMAS3 CONQUERS FOREIGN MARKETS

The wooden Christmas tree has quickly gained popularity in foreign markets, in particular Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, and Croatia.



Angelca wool felt angels, designed by Rada Kos.



Radika rag dolls, designed by Rada Kos.

Orders are also coming in from New York and Canada, and in October a considerable number of trees were sold to Japan. In Slovenia, Xmas3 can be bought from major stores selling Christmas decorations or ordered online at xmas3.si.

At the end of January, the tree will be exhibited again at the Christmasworld fair in Frankfurt, where it received the 2016 Decoration Star International Innovation Award.

GINGERBREAD BISCUITS - PREFERRED DECORATIONS

In addition to Xmas3, Rada also makes interesting Christmas decorations to hang on the wooden tree. "Gingerbread cookies are our preferred ornaments, because the scent of cinnamon and other festive spices is what creates the wonderful Christmas atmosphere. My mother's side of the family comes from the Czech Republic, where artfully crafted and decorated gingerbread called *perniky* make for traditional Christmas tree decorations. I use my great-grandmother's recipe to make Xmas3 biscuits." This year the selection of baked ornaments was complemented by terracotta and white clay decorations with traditional Slovenian lace patterns. In making these, Rada was helped by the Dolfka Boštjančič Centre for Training, Work and Care. "Our smallest tree is also available as a set that includes 14 ornaments from one of the collections." The designer has also produced limited edition collections of *Angelca* wool felt angels, *Hairri* snowmen made of home-made felt balls, and *Radika* rag dolls.

And how does Rada's family prepare for the festive season? "In our family, Christmas starts in October. I'm editor of *Prostočasnik*, a magazine which offers creative ideas for children, parents, and teachers. Our work on the Christmas issue starts in mid-October, since our ideas are then put to use in schools and kindergartens preparing products for their Christmas bazaars.

Our days are filled with cooking, baking, shaping, decorating, writing, and taking pictures. When the first week of Advent starts, we are ready for Christmas," laughs Rada.

The Xmas3 Rada puts up at home is a "memorial" as members of the family decorate the tree with ornaments from all over the world which they have brought home from their journeys. Decorated in this manner, Xmas3 is truly beautiful.



