

Sinfo

A photograph of a museum gallery with a polished floor and a rowing boat on display. The boat is orange and black, and is positioned in the foreground. In the background, there is a white sculpture of a person rowing. The ceiling is made of wooden slats, and the walls are white. The lighting is warm and focused on the boat.

DECEMBER 2010

BUSINESS • CULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • SPORTS

Creating
the image



37 PEOPLE
ARCHITECT JANI VOZELJ -
DESIGNER OF SPACE



Vesna Žarkovič
Editor

TO EXCEED EVEN THE BOLDEST DREAMS

At a ceremony in Paris earlier this month, the judging panel of the European Business Awards – an awards programme that attracts 15,000 entries – presented Ajdovščina-based company Pipistrel with the UKTI Innovation Award. To be acknowledged as the best in this category is a great compliment and represents an enormous success which, admits Pipistrel director and owner Ivo Boscarol, exceeds his wildest dreams.

“
 TO SEEK SOLUTIONS,
 NOT PROBLEMS,
 AND – MOST IMPORTANTLY
 – NOT TO GIVE UP EASILY.”

Another name that is known and recognised around the world is that of this month's interviewee, the distinguished academic Renata Salecl, who says that it is up to philosophers and sociologists to critically evaluate current conditions and point the way to social development that will mean a better life for all of us.

The name of Slovenia has also been consolidated around the world by the Entrepreneurs of the Year, Marjeta and Marino Furlan, the founders and owners of Intra Lighting, who are convinced that you cannot work well if you are not optimistic, if you do not believe in your work and in good results. They take pride in the fact that they seek solutions, not problems, and – most importantly – do not give up easily.

In this issue you can also read about the second anniversary of Borut Pahor's government, which should perhaps be subtitled 'Looking for an economic way out'. This crisis would prove to be the biggest economic upheaval since the Second World War.

But as the Furlans say: you cannot work well if you are not optimistic and if you do not believe in your work and in good results. Others who have exceeded their dreams are the record number of runners who took part in this year's Ljubljana Marathon. Without faith in their ability to achieve goals that are apparently impossible for ordinary human beings, they would not be capable of running a marathon. Prime Minister Borut Pahor was among the runners.

MONTHLY COMMENTARY	04
Two years of the Pahor government: in search of an economic exit strategy	
IN FOCUS	06
Creating the image, A huge opportunity - organ transplants	
INTERVIEW	12
Renata Salecl: "It is up to philosophers, sociologists and social scientists to attempt to critically re-evaluate the current situation"	
BUSINESS	16
Economic growth once again driven by exports	
LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR	18
Sun Rongmin, Marija Adanja	
ART & CULTURE	20
The fellowship of the Borštnik ring, Manca Juvan and her unordinary lives	
OUR EXCELLENCE	27
Entrepreneurs of the Year: Marjeta and Marino Furlan, Steklarna Rogaška - The elegance of glass	
SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS	33
Time for wine	
SPORTS	36
The Ljubljana marathon	
PEOPLE	37
Architect Jani Vozelj, Designer of Space	
CULTURAL HERITAGE	41
Myths and fairytales of Slovenia	
NATURAL HERITAGE	45
Pokljuka - Sleeping Beauty is Wide Awake	



33



30



33



12



27

Cover photo Pipistrel Virus SW two-seat sport aircraft. Žiga Intihar

Sinfo - Slovenian information

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Gateway to information on Slovenia www.slovenia.si
Government Communication Office www.ukom.gov.si
Government of the Republic of Slovenia www.vlada.si
Slovenian Tourist Board www.slovenia.info
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Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia www.stat.si
State Portal of the Republic of Slovenia e-uprava.gov.si

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TWO YEARS OF THE PAHOR GOVERNMENT: IN SEARCH OF AN ECONOMIC EXIT STRATEGY

Photo STA



Darijan Košir

'The measures Slovenia has had to adopt over the past two years have been risky and painful, yet urgent and unavoidable.'

ON SUNDAY 21 NOVEMBER BORUT PAHOR MARKED EXACTLY TWO YEARS SINCE BEING sworn in at the head of a new government, formed by his Social Democrat party in coalition with Zares, LDS and Desus. The coalition had a sound majority with 55 of the 90 seats in parliament. However, even as the new prime minister's oath was being made that autumn day in 2008, an economic crisis was knocking on Slovenia's door – as in so many countries around the world – the largest crisis of its kind since the Second World War. By way of illustration, in the month in which Pahor was sworn in and his government took office, Slovenia's industrial production was 14% down on the figure for November of the previous year. The crisis was so serious that in 2009 – the first year of the Pahor government – the country's GDP fell by 9%, the highest ever peacetime fall in Slovenia's GDP.

The Pahor government had no choice but to completely reassess all the priorities they had proposed in their election campaign during summer 2008. The coalition's agenda was dramatically altered and its response to the consequences of the global economic and financial crisis has defined the entire mandate of the new government to this day. Immediate anti-crisis measures had to be taken addressing the financial sector, the economy in general and intervening to maintain the population's social status. Facing the crisis later revealed many of the country's long-term development weaknesses and demonstrated that major structural adjustments were also needed. All major government action over the first two years was therefore directed towards realising these objectives, so now – at the end of 2010 – Slovenia is in a significantly better position than most European countries and EU member states.

How then can we summarise the government's major achievements over the past two years, and sum up the fundamental measures it has adopted?

In one sentence we can state that despite the tough situation the Slovenian government has prevented the crisis in Slovenia leading to more serious economic, political or social shocks. Furthermore, it seems that at the same time the government has managed to maintain social cohesion and prevent the recession from having a more serious impact on the weakest strata of society. Put more simply: despite the record fall in GDP, economic growth for 2010 will already be close to or over 1% of GDP and Slovenia will be on the road to economic recovery. If the macroeconomic forecasts prove robust, in the 2012 election year Slovenia should be returning relatively favourable economic growth levels of around 2.5%.

The measures Slovenia has had to adopt over the past two years have been risky and painful, yet urgent and unavoidable. In order to ride the economic crisis with some sense of equilibrium, the state had to borrow on foreign markets: first to stabilise the banking system (with guarantees and deposits) and later to tackle the social situation. Over the two years public borrowing has increased significantly, but that was an unavoidable measure, without which the Slovenian economy would have collapsed. Despite that unwished-for intervention, today all Slovenia's debt figures are better than those of nearly all comparable states: public debt stands at 42% of GDP, well below the Maastricht criterion of 60%, while the budget deficit is now around 5% of GDP, and after the 2011 (4.5%) and 2012 budget (3.6%) will be reduced to the 3% Maastricht figure by 2013. Slovenia has achieved this through considerable efforts to reduce spending, especially public sector pay, pensions and social transfers, and applying a strict upper limit on total public spending.

Of course, the crisis has had its victims just as elsewhere in the world. Due to an ill-adapted economic structure and mistakes made by company management

during the economic good times (e.g. management buy-outs based on massive borrowing) some very large Slovenian companies went bankrupt, such as the textile giant Mura, the car industry supplier Prevent and construction giant Vegrad; similar companies such as the beverage holding company Pivovarna Laško, financial holding company Istrabenz and the largest Slovenian

'We should not forget that without reforming the pension legislation, Slovenia's public debt would already exceed 60% of GDP by 2015, which would break one of the EU's fundamental Maastricht criteria. In other words, without extending the retirement age to 65, pension spending would have led to increased borrowing, reducing the general value of pensions in the long term.'

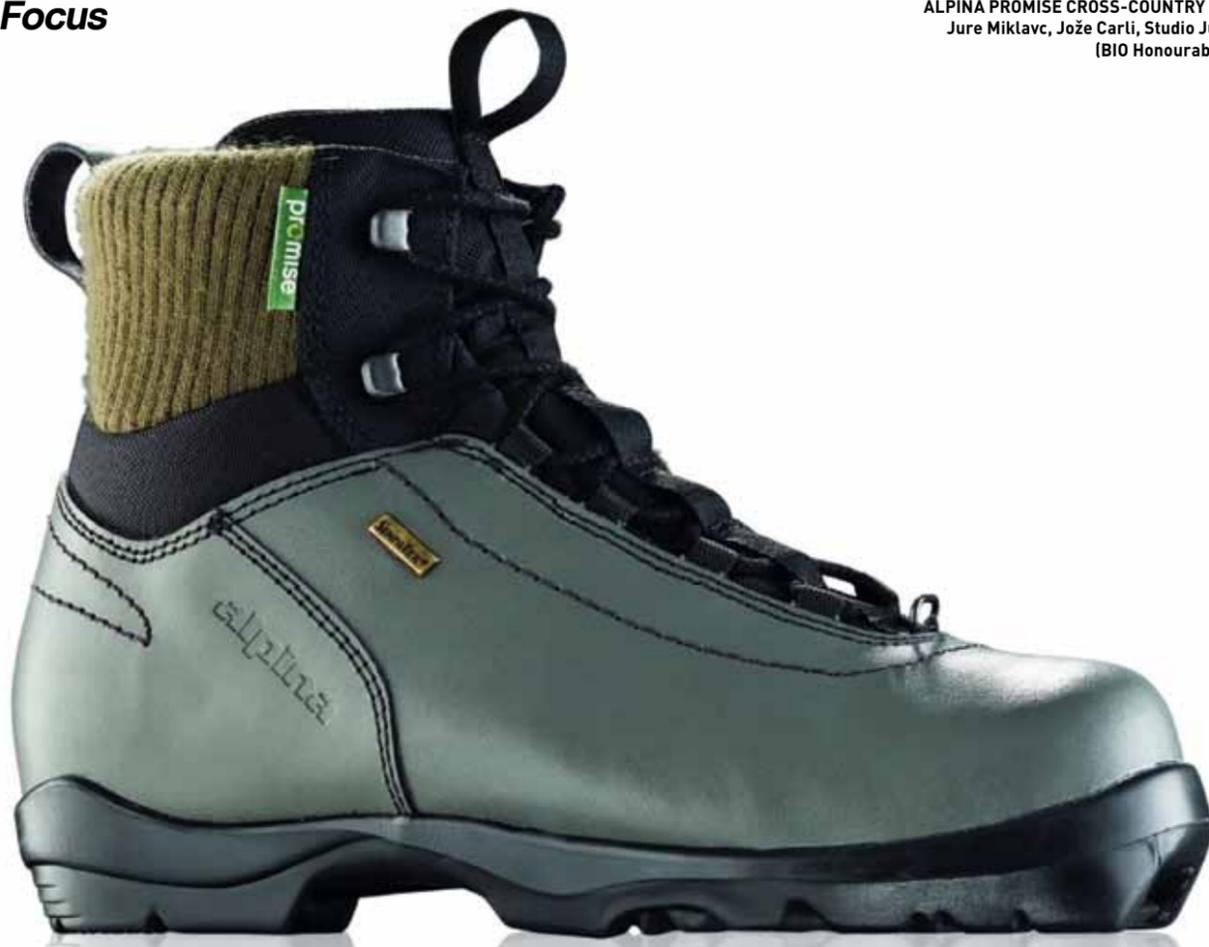
technical goods trader Merkur went into financial difficulties and had to fundamentally restructure their business. Despite the collapse of these large, uncompetitive or indebted business systems with several thousand employees, the measures taken by Slovenia, including spending 44% more funds on social need than in previous years, managed to maintain the survey rate of unemployment at just over 7% and the absolute figure at around 100,000 people, although forecasts suggested a figure between 130,000 and 150,000 was unavoidable. Taking those forecasts into account we can estimate that the social measures saved around 40,000 jobs.

As stated in addition to resolving the current consequences of the economic crisis, the government dedicated most of

its work to structural reforms that will correct and consolidate the economic foundations of the state so that no future crisis will have the same devastating impact as the current one has. The most important of these was the pension reform, which the government planned, prepared and placed before parliament during this period. The new pension legislation is one of Slovenia's furthest-reaching measures in Slovenia, and over the long term it will provide the state with much more sustainable public finances and offer a more secure old age to all pensioners. We should not forget that without reforming the pension legislation, Slovenia's public debt would already exceed 60% of GDP by 2015, which would break one of the EU's fundamental Maastricht criteria. In other words, without extending the retirement age to 65, pension spending would have led to increased borrowing, reducing the general value of pensions in the long term.

Furthermore, over the past two years the government has responded to the crisis with structural adaptations as part of its crisis exit strategy. These adjustments required 26 new and amended laws, of which 13 are already in force, while 7 are already in parliamentary proceedings (including the most difficult, the pension, railway, road and labour legislation), with just 6 waiting for government approval. The government has already started to prepare three more difficult packages of new legislation, on health, agriculture and public sector reform. These three reforms will allow the state to make long-term savings and make these important, and indeed often key, sectors more rational.

Despite the economic crisis, Slovenia has not sidelined foreign policy. After almost two decades of stasis it is undoubtedly a great achievement to have reached agreement with Croatia to go before an international tribunal to resolve both the two countries' border dispute and the dispute over the saving deposits of former Ljubljanska Banka customers in Croatia. Any interim or final assessment of the current government will have to place resolving relations with Croatia in a very high place. •



CREATING THE IMAGE

Jože Osterman Photo Archive Biennial of Industrial Design

THE MONTH OF DESIGN CAUSED CONSIDERABLE excitement in Slovenia when it began at the end of October, particularly with the interesting objects displayed in some of Ljubljana's parks and squares. The event was a useful challenge to the routinely self-sufficient manner in which we citizens generally accept the development of our city. In Ljubljana, a city which has changed greatly in recent years, and where, particularly along the banks of the Ljubljanica and in the Old Town, a number of brand-new urban spaces have burst into life, design has become an extremely topical business, since it involves a fundamental extension of architectural creativity that is regulating even the last details of the altered city. It would appear that in the journey from the grey, monotonous and half-ruined urban vistas of 30 years ago to today's Ljubljana, the exceptional beauty of which is acknowledged by even the most sceptical of foreign town planners, awareness of the importance of a well-designed urban environment has taken a giant leap, perhaps outstripping all the other awarenesses cultivated by today's modern citizen. Although we are far from being able to

commend today's situation as excellent or even merely good, the present is light years ahead of that period half a century or so ago when it seemed that, from the design point of view, Ljubljana was practically on its deathbed. Of course, it is not all about the city and the outdoor environment: changes have also found their way into the interiors of houses, shops, bus and railway stations, our clothes and, last but not least, our general sense of life, on which design undoubtedly has an enormous influence.

This is why we are able to say that the history of design in Slovenia in the last 50 years is a kind of concentrate of the social and individual development undergone by Slovenian society. If we accept the principle that the appearance of a thing always reflects the structure of the community that creates it, this is in fact logical. And if at the same time we agree with the thesis that design is 'a field which includes several creative activities and significantly defines endeavours and activities within communication, architecture, engineering,' as Slovenian designers themselves state on their society's website, it is clear that today's human culture is to a large extent

dependent on design, in other words on the activity of 'creating appearance', a typical or even essential characteristic of modern civilisation, which increasingly conflates appearance with the essence of a thing. Harvard professor and design theorist Robert Hayes recently stated that 'Fifteen years ago companies competed on price, now it's quality, tomorrow it's design.' This tallies well with the statement made at the formal opening of this year's Biennial of Industrial Design (BIO) by Janez Škrabec, the event's president, namely that design already represents a criterion for 70% of today's consumers. Global manufacturing enables price reductions, global technology ensures good technical quality. As a result, the criterion that remains when it comes to making products distinctive and attractive is, above all their design.

A little history

But let us go back a little, and we will see that half a century ago awareness of the importance of design or the aesthetics of production was, in fact, one of the things that placed Slovenia in the foreground within the context of the former socialist countries. One of the earliest indicators of a different 'artisticness' appeared in Ljubljana in 1955 with the founding of the Ljubljana International Biennial of Graphic Arts, as a kind of bridge between East and West. In the early 1960s this ranked as one of the most important art events in Europe. In those years printmaking was

In the planned economy of socialist countries, however, the guaranteed market meant that for the majority of companies there was no need to develop 'additional quality' in the form of design, so the cultural event served precisely to develop awareness of how important design can be.

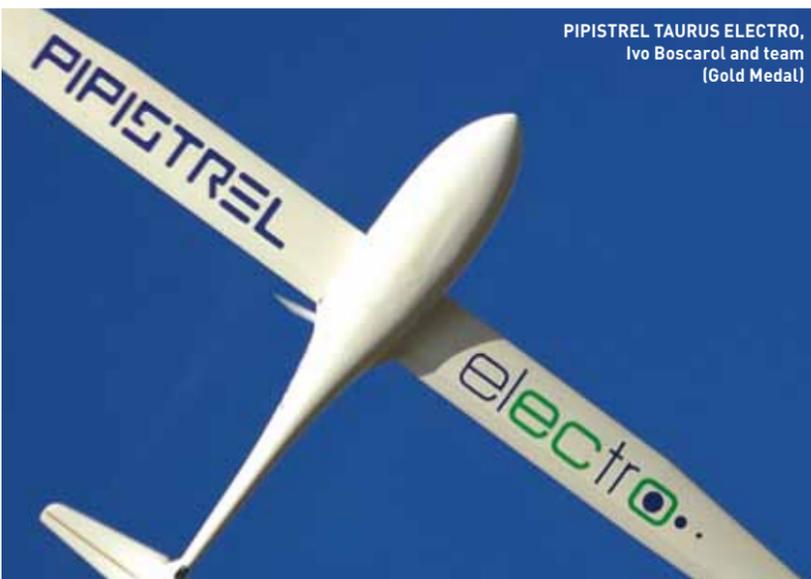
promoted as the commercially most accessible artistic product. In terms of structure, it emerged from the expression of socialist realism and achieved an interesting status which today we could call 'global'. The founding of the biennial coincided with the birth of an artistic current known as the 'Ljubljana School' of graphic arts, which, thanks to its innovativeness, established itself as one of the most incisive artistic trends of the Cold War period, with a reputation that

spread across Europe. The attention paid by this school to everyday, almost trivial subjects which had never previously had the opportunity to become art objects gave rise, for the first time, to the awareness that in our world all the things that surround us are important. The principle of functionality or, rather, utility, which was also the prevailing principle in Yugoslav socialism, was faced for the first time with the requirement that things should also be beautiful and nice to look at. It is no coincidence that this period also coincided with the beginning of increased exports of Slovenian products to other markets, including the most competitive global markets. There, the requirement of faultless aesthetics continued to be one of the fundamental principles of companies that had already wrested themselves from the grip of the existential difficulties caused by the Second World War and had begun adding new elements to their production.

It was in this period, specifically in 1964, that the aforementioned Biennial of Industrial Design was founded. This >>>



BIRDHOUSE,
Metod Burgar
(BIO Quality Concept Award)



PIPISTREL TAURUS ELECTRO,
Ivo Boscarol and team
(Gold Medal)

was one of the more interesting cultural projects of the former socialist system and one that began to blur the boundaries between East and West. The main instigator was Edo Ravnikar, the most important Slovenian architect of the time. This fact in itself heralded the start of increasing interconnection between architecture and design. In the majority of Western countries, industrial design occurred spontaneously and was the natural result of stiff competition; devoting special attention to design in the form of design exhibitions was not necessary there. In the planned economy of socialist countries, however, the guaranteed market meant that for the majority of companies there was no need to develop 'additional quality' in the form of design, so the cultural event served precisely to develop awareness of how important design can be. From this point of view BIO was unique – and remains so today: although its stimulation of design is no longer necessary, its tradition has become an element of prestige. As

a result, the biennial has easily weathered the crises that have inevitably occurred.

The third significant occurrence for the development of design was the founding of the Design Department at the Academy of Fine Art in Ljubljana in 1984. After many years, the Academy appended '...and Design' to its name, a clear indication of the reinforced status which interdisciplinary design had acquired both within this institution and in society in general. When we consider that two years ago the name of Slovenia's main specialised architecture museum also gained the same suffix, it is clear that we are able to say that design in Slovenia has experienced an indisputable social affirmation corresponding to its actual importance for contemporary social development.

All of these developments have been accompanied by increasing public interest in the achievements of modern design, with the result that there has never been an adverse social climate for this creative field. The achievements of Slovenian designers have been rewarded and recognised at the most competitive international events and exhibitions, and reviewed in the general and specialist press. The first to break into the public consciousness were a small group of successful industrial designers: who does not remember Niko Kralj's timeless Rex chair, part of the permanent design exhibition at MoMA in New York, or the Iskra telephone, a still-current product of the design department at electronics company Iskra in conjunction with designer Davorin Savnik? A further confirmation of this development was the fact that the products of all of Slovenia's flagship companies tended to be connected to outstanding design: Elan skis, a range of Iskra products, Gorenje refrigerators, Alpina ski boots, even Meblo mattresses burst onto the global market in the socialist era as some of the finest products in their respective fields.

In general it may be said that in around 1980 Slovenia was doing a very good job of following the design standards dictated at that time by Europe, in particular Scandinavia. Open borders, an adequate level of attention from society (making it possible to organise a good exchange of information and experiences of every kind), great interest among young people in working in this sector and, above all, the rapidly expanding field of visual communications, internet, and the explosion of consumerism and different lifestyles in the 1990s, helped to establish, in Slovenia too, awareness of design as one of the fundamental conditions of the modern world. The fact that, for example, five prestigious international Red Dot design awards went to Slovenian designers this year is evidence of the stable creative energy in this field.

Events and achievements of the Month of Design

The Month of Design and the opening of the 22nd international Biennial of Industrial Design are two highly anticipated and well-established events which this year, with their freshness and outward brilliance, have undoubtedly emphasised some of the new features of the design field. Much of the credit for this goes to BIG BOX, the organiser and coordinator of the Month of Design, which through an imaginative selection of events (around 20) has given Slovenian designers in particular an excellent opportunity to present themselves. The programme began with a dazzling opening event at the Viba Film studios, the venue chosen by the organisers, where a number of parallel presentations were arranged – Eat & Drink Design, Flower & Fashion Design, Big Project by Ana Lazovski – and awards were presented. All this was the introduction to an international conference entitled Making Design Work.

At the same time, the organisers introduced a number of smaller-scale but still very interesting exhibitions taking place at various venues, from permanent exhibition spaces and galleries to shops and private residences and, as mentioned above, parks and squares. Miklošič Park, in front of the Palace of Justice, hosted a presentation of 50 products, between them the winners of 42 national and international awards. Five of the products were specially selected as the recipients of All Design Awards, and the winning designers undoubtedly deserve a special mention here: the Swiss UAV design team of Elke Novak, Lars Zander and Tim Moser for their KOAX X-240 unmanned aerial vehicle; Thomas Meyerhoffer of Global Surf Industries for his Meyerhoffer surfboard; Thomas Schaa, Urban Alhgren, Alfred Alfred and Anna-Carin Neale of

Swedish design agency No Picnic for their Pacemaker portable DJ system; Jorr van Ast for his Nomad wooden table, designed for Dutch furniture maker Arco; and Shinichiro Ogata for his Wasara paper tableware for Wasara Co. Ltd.

But this was not the only interesting exhibition: department store Maximarket hosted an exhibition entitled The Paper Dress As a Home Product, and Kubus-Interior hosted Hvala, Antonio! Then there was What Are You Up To (On Breg?) on the new Breg ob Ljubljani riverside promenade, an exhibition by Karin Košak in the Feniks gallery, Damiana Bitežnik and Žiga Mihelčič at Peko... and many more besides. Ljubljana became a whirlpool of astonishing and warm-hearted design events,

and citizens had the sensation that something unusual was happening very close at hand. Design came in through every door, enhancing many environments with a new and surprising beauty.

It would, of course, be wrong not to devote some attention to this year's edition of the Biennial of Industrial Design, which once again (fittingly) took place in the elegant surroundings of the Museum of Architecture and Design in Fužine Castle. The elegant décor of this building, together with the wonderful autumn colours and the restrained beauty of the castle courtyard, and the interesting architecture of the restored internal wing of the museum, create a venue with a certain tradition that could not be substituted by anything else. In most senses BIO has remained within its established image, and there is nothing wrong with that, since this image is a good one and gives the visitor the pleasant feeling that he has discovered many new things.

An international jury consisting of design experts Luigi Ferrara (Canada, president), Vivian Cheng Wai Kwan (Hong Kong), Malcolm Garrett (United Kingdom), Peter Krečič (Slovenia) and Sanna Simola (Finland) awarded BIO Gold Medals to the three top designs. These were: the Pipistrel Taurus Electro two-seat powered glider with retractable electric motor for self-launching designed by Ivo Boscarol and his team

BIO naturally also rewards the finest design achievements. This year 503 submissions arrived from 34 countries, evidence that interest in taking part continues to grow. The selection committee chose 132 entries from 24 countries. BIO 22 included 66 entries in the Products category, 20 in the Product Graphics and Information Design category and 46 in the Concepts category (including 35 projects by students).

at Pipistrel in Ajdovščina, Slovenia; the Sky Planter inverted plant pot designed by Patrick Morris for Boskke of Wellington, New Zealand; and branding and posters for the City Theatre in Žilina (Slovakia) by Emil Drličiak and Pavel Choma. There were also honourable mentions for eye-catching products such as Alpina's new cross-country skiing boots by designer Jure Miklavc of Slovenia, drinks packaging by Juraj Demovič and Livia Lorinczová of Slovakia and, in the Concepts category, the TFP1

Prague tram redesign by student designer Anna Marešová of the Czech Republic. The most encouraging thing is the great variety of the exhibited designs: there is not a single pattern or model of design that could be considered common to them. The traditional features of the Biedermeier style, the warm colours of the Baroque, the sharp edges of Classical design and the composed coolness of Neoclassicism – you can find all this at BIO in designs which will probably successfully enhance our everyday environments. Design, then, is a form of creativity which includes everything that has ever accumulated in our consciousness: it reminds us of when we were young and at the same time shapes a new world.



A HUGE OPPORTUNITY

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS, THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN SLOVENIA AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Anastazija Bizjak and Branko Mrak Photo Anastazija Bizjak and Branko Mrak

Organ and tissue transplants are the most modern method for treating end-stage chronic organ failure, and have been conducted in Slovenia since the very beginning of this field of medicine. This year marked the fortieth anniversary of the first kidney transplant at the University Medical Centre in Ljubljana. Doctors in Slovenia routinely perform kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and bone marrow transplants. The longest post-transplant survival is a patient who has had a transplanted kidney for forty years, which bears out the quality of the work by everyone involved. Several European countries including Slovenia formed an organisation called Eurotransplant in order to promote and coordinate transplants among its member countries. Since 2000, Slovenian doctors have successfully transplanted around eight hundred organs. By all measures and standards we are at an exemplary European level. The Slovenian Transplant Association, which provides post-operational patient care, has four hundred and seventy

members, and celebrated its tenth anniversary this summer.

The Association carries out its mission as a humanitarian organisation at state level, and volunteerism has become its standard work model. The members of our association are aware that we are citizens of Slovenia, and that our work contributes to the development of the entire field. We cooperate with related organisations in Europe and abroad. The annual participation of our member athletes at the European Heart and Lung Transplant Games and membership in the European Heart and Lung Transplant Federation, as well as the winter and summer World Transplant Games and membership in the World Transplant Games Federation is a wonderful promotion for Slovenia. Slovenian transplantees are aware that we live in a country where this method of treatment is available and that we can get another chance. Every time we get together with our friends at these events, we try through discussion to find appropriate models of aid for places where transplants are not yet available.



Patients and their loved ones have widely different experiences regarding transplants

Anastazija Bizjak: I found out that I had chronic kidney disease after graduating from college, at my physical for my first job. This is the kind of disease that runs its course regardless of care or treatment. In fact it was better if I just didn't think about it. Six years went by.

During this time I worked as a dentist. I got married, and had a baby son and daughter. Every year I felt worse, and thought that life was extremely difficult. My midday nap was a mandatory ritual, and I literally collapsed into it every day. Every week I would have a migraine attack. My body was swollen with retentions. Finally after six years both of my kidneys failed and I began dialysis treatments. They told me that from then on dialysis would be the end-all and be-all of my life. Even if my children were sick, I had to go for my dialysis.

My illness turned all of my family's expectations and hopes upside down. My entire life was subordinated to life on dialysis. The help I received from my parents and my own family at that time was crucial. They went through a major ordeal. Some people's parents and/or partners can't bear the burden of the disease and they go their own way. Dialysis became a part of my life. During the first few weeks I had euphoric dreams, since my brain was processing substances which had remained in my body due to the impaired functioning of my kidneys. I could no longer urinate because of my kidney failure. Every time I was hooked up to the dialysis machine I experienced migraines and vomiting. When you are undergoing dialysis you can sit or lie down, read or watch television, but soon you don't remember what you saw or read. Around noon you become restless. You can't work, much less be creative or think. You are connected to a machine which is cleaning your body and brain so that you can survive for another day and a half.

Fifteen hours a week are lost, but you have to make up for it somehow. Especially if you have children, who want a whole person, not somebody who lies down for half the week while they are waiting at home to play with you. At night you have nightmares about high potassium levels. At weekends you count your calories and when you go on trips you bring your high potassium medication. You can't eat any more nuts, chocolate, fresh fruit and vegetables, baked potatoes and many other things. You need protein and regular exercise in order to maintain your strength and conditioning. When you're thirsty, you can lick ice cubes or lemons. You can read about the damage this does to your teeth in any magazine. With two small children, my home and work, I hadn't the time or the physical strength I needed to advance in the career I had studied so hard for for so many years. A young Slovenian writer has called dialysis a temporary part-time job with an empty bank account.

The only way out was a transplant, in my case kidneys. I waited seven and a half years for them, which was much too long. At the time, a law on transplants was not a national priority. Today, Slovenian legislation is well-ordered and up to date. My advice to patients is to keep trying, get your check-ups and constantly tell your doctors that you want a transplant. Transplantation is a therapy, while dialysis is just a stop-gap treatment. A lot of people just roll over and don't receive the encouragement to obtain the most modern form of therapy. Prolonging the treatment period on dialysis impairs the health of your entire body. Patients have to find out about transplant options for themselves during the chronic organ failure stage. You have to trust the experts, and after the transplant you have to participate in your treatment and in enjoying life.

After my successful transplant I came back to a life which I hadn't known for a long, long time. I felt better every day. I began to be able to make water again - don't worry, the bladder has a memory. I could eat bananas and salads, and I could drink liquids. My legs calmed down overnight, and I slowly began to get back into shape. I was freed from the machine and I could do what I wanted with my time. My children couldn't believe how much free time we would be able to enjoy together.

Since I was unable to advance in my career owing to working only part time, I began to volunteer with the Slovenian Transplant Association. The Association includes patients with all types of transplanted organs and their loved ones. The work rounds out my everyday routine, gives me a sense of my role as an individual within society and affords me spiritual and professional growth. I hope that our government will someday realise how important the health and life of every individual is and determine what its roles are. I work towards this goal within our Association's mission. I am thankful every day for the precious gift and to Slovenian medicine for allowing me to receive it. The path that I have walked to date would be meaningless to me without my family, and I see it as a huge opportunity.

“It is up to philosophers, sociologists and social scientists to attempt to critically re-evaluate the current situation”

RENATA SALECL

The philosopher Renata Salecl, who as senior researcher at the Institute of Criminology at Ljubljana's law faculty analyses modern social phenomena in the light of psychoanalysis, legal theory and criminology, was proclaimed 2010 Female Scientist of the Year by Jana magazine.

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Šimen Zupančič

You deal with the analysis of modern social phenomena from the point of view of psychoanalysis, legal theory and criminology. What are you most occupied with at present, what is it you are doing at the moment?

Right now I am looking at the question of what society will be like in the future, what concepts of thought will remain in a society facing the breakthrough of neuroscience and genetics. Major changes are occurring in the field of criminal law. Previously, psychologists and psychiatrists were consulted about the sanity of defendants, now neuroscientists and geneticists are asked, which is leading in a dangerous direction. An exaggerated faith in scientific results and the idea that science will provide us with all the answers is indeed misplaced. As social scientists we must take a critical view of this development, where we are all too quick to use science to decide on the future behaviour of individuals. At the moment I'm critically addressing neuroscience and the law. We live in very complex times, in which it's difficult to maintain a distance from events, so it is up to philosophers, sociologists and social scientists to attempt to critically re-evaluate the current situation. My task is to analyse modern ideology, post-industrial forms of capitalism so I can look at criminology from a critical distance, applying a range of different approaches.

What awaits in the society of the future?

Looking at the future, we're thinking of

new forms of society, new scenarios for capitalism or another system that might be more benevolent, reducing social differences and creating security. Sadly today there is a growing sense of anxiety, which is only exacerbated by the media's reporting of catastrophes. The crisis has brought us face-to-face with disturbing expectations for the future, and we also face environmental change. We perceive ourselves as the continuation of what we know, as if the organisation of post-capitalism is the final way of organising things we can think of, a final form of society. We don't have inventive views of democracy, we are voting in lower numbers, and in effect a pessimistic view is in the ascendancy with few new ideas around and little thought for what is to come. I am studying why this is the case. As scientists we cannot provide

“WE DON'T HAVE INVENTIVE VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY, WE ARE VOTING IN LOWER NUMBERS, AND IN EFFECT A PESSIMISTIC VIEW IS IN THE ASCENDANCY WITH FEW NEW IDEAS AROUND AND LITTLE THOUGHT FOR WHAT IS TO COME.”

ideas of how society should form, but we can warn that society does not have to stay as it is. I fear social inequality, which massively reduces quality of life by excluding many people, for example, through unemployment. This leads to increased criminality, the break-up of families, more and more dependence on drugs and alcohol, in fact everything we

fear. The rich close themselves off from society, shut off in gated communities, yet still they are anxious. There is a lot of research into this indicating that even people's physical health is better in societies with less inequality, for both rich and poor. In healthy societies there is better access to healthcare, schools, jobs that do not create stress, and much more thought is given to how to offer a decent life to as many people as possible.

Where would you seek the reasons for this lack of the right vision?

With the fall of socialism we no longer had any real alternative forms for organising society and the opinion prevailed that the way society was organised in the developed world was society's final form. Sometimes a utopian idea is needed in order to think differently. I have studied the ways in which societies were organised 100 years ago, and what people then believed that science would bring. They believed that genetics would contribute to improving societies, to a better quality of life, though we know that the use of eugenics in the Second World War had catastrophic results. Initially, when faith in science was so great, no one imagined that it should be slowed down in some way. Even President Nixon, at a time when the US was conquering the moon, considered that it was only a question of time before his country solved the problem of treating cancer. Under his leadership massive funds were invested in that, but all that came out of it were some ideas about hormone growth. This >>



faith is similar to mythological faiths that existed long ago, when myths served to mitigate our fear of aging and death, solving quandaries about how to improve our intellectual ability.

We live in very complex times, in which it's difficult to keep a distance from events, so it is for philosophers, sociologists and social scientists to attempt to critically re-evaluate the current situation. What is the present day like and how can we evaluate it?

In my last book, *Choice*, I asked why people were less motivated to engage in social criticism, why people had turned inward, to themselves and an exceptional increase in feelings of guilt that tell people they are responsible for everything that is wrong with them. Capitalism teaches us that everything is possible, that the individual can attain everything, we live in a time of radical individualisation, looking at ourselves and our lives as a project over which we have absolute power. We even see our children as a project that we have complete influence over. I don't remember my parents thinking that they could master someone in that way. Today there is also great fear of the unpredictable, while all attempts to predict the unpredictable, even how the markets work, have shown that even the best models have mistakes.

So the new book, *Choice*, recently published in the UK, has been translated into six languages, while your previous one, *On Anxiety*, has already been translated into ten languages. What do these books address?

So far I've published four books in English, and I'm currently working on the fifth, which has the title *Future Perfect*. It is about thoughts of the future, how we attempt to see our body as something we can master, we master our intellectual ability, children, even our own death. There is considerable pressure on middle class parents to organise the ideal childhood, to encourage the greatest possible creativity, while children are extremely pressured

by all kinds of extra-curricular activities. People believe too much in the idea that parents can have total influence over a child's upbringing. To some extent you are responsible for things that happen to you, we still believe that love is a choice, we read about how to convince someone to love us ... we believe very much in love at first sight, we believe in horoscopes. There is a lot of fatalism. The more anxiety increases in society, the more people turn to clairvoyants and gurus. By identifying with them, we reduce anxiety. During the last crisis, psychoanalysts in England noted that many people in high positions who had lost their job felt a sense of extreme release, because someone else had decided something for them that they could not themselves. Finally after losing their job, they could start to do the

“THERE IS A LOT OF FATALISM. THE MORE ANXIETY INCREASES IN SOCIETY, THE MORE PEOPLE TURN TO CLAIRVOYANTS AND GURUS. BY IDENTIFYING WITH THEM, WE REDUCE ANXIETY.”

things they actually wanted to do.

You move between Ljubljana, London and New York. How does Slovenian society compare to other societies around the world?

In essence, life is similar everywhere, there aren't any major differences. In Slovenia there are fewer criminals, so there is a greater sense of security, there is still a good sense of connection with the extended family, which reduces the impact of poverty. We were thrown into capitalism very quickly, which led to a rapid collapse of friendship ties, to greater competitiveness, new stresses, and we are swamped by consumerism. We have terrible TV channels, I've not watched TV for a decade, we just copy the worst programmes from abroad. For me, they just ramp up the anxiety and I see nothing good in it. I'd rather go to the cinema. Slovenia's problem is its small size, and when you don't have a great flow of people, it's harder to create the right team. Towns

are also being organised like elsewhere around the world, shopping centres are being built, which I see as a problem, because they do not maintain the town centres. I love a town with old workshops, old crafts such as cobblers, tailors and the like ... these shopping malls are in my view a real waste of people's free time. A major problem is the stress of life, emotional violence is on the increase, bullying, family violence, road rage, putting people down at work. I worry where this will lead, just a situation in which people are afraid for their jobs. The consequences are also harsh on the body. In England, for example, students are trying to improve concentration when studying at university by using drugs that are otherwise used to treat dementia. There have also been changes in drug use in society. Now cocaine is fashionable, which makes you more effective and grandiose, or ecstasy, which makes you more sociable. In England people are even proud of being drunk, with that being presented as something positive. Police officers in summer even carry flip-flops which they hand out to drunk women in high heels, so it's easier for them to get home.

The aim of the Female Scientist of the Year award organised by the women's magazine, *Jana*, working for many years now together with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is to broaden horizons and promote interest in science among the public. Is that interest actually there?

Faith in science is exceptional, excessive even, as I said. I fully support the *Jana* campaign, also because it's unique, there's nothing like it anywhere else. My colleagues in England said that awards like this couldn't happen at a time when there is such little respect for intelligence or for women breaking into the upper echelons of science. We live in a time that is not the best-disposed to sexual equality, there is a lack of women in the highest positions. In the UK too only 15% of politicians are women, while in the Slovenian mayoral

elections female representation was catastrophic, so it is vital that *Jana* magazine doesn't just portray women in the roles of models or suffering mothers. It is very important in general for girls to have women that are positive role models. To some extent women are equal, but it is difficult to really 'overachieve' and women sometimes restrict themselves, in part because it is so difficult to manage work and family. The recognition that you can have everything, but not all at the same time, is gaining ground. Women are still far more burdened by the raising of children, and little encouragement is offered there. And in Slovenia the situation is very poor in the media, which feature fewer and fewer female guests. In countries where feminism had a greater presence this would not happen. In Slovenia feminism is seen as unladylike, instead of as a struggle for equality. It is interesting that abroad I have been helped most by female colleagues.

What led you to move abroad?

You can't work in scientific fields, if you don't have at least one foot abroad. Science is international. In Slovenia alone you don't have the people to work with, and besides that I'm very curious by nature. I've found my best collaborators abroad. Slovenia is small, but anyway today we all communicate online and it doesn't matter where you live. I love big cities, with lots of cultural events. London and New York are the cities that suit me best.

Have you ever thought of going into politics?

I've no desire to go into politics. As long as I'm doing research it would be a waste of time, as I've no patience for endless meetings. Nor could I offer quick solutions for change, and without a lot of support I couldn't change much. It's difficult for an individual to achieve something on their own.

What tasks await you in the near future?

I have a lot of projects planned. There's a good atmosphere at the Institute, I have support from colleagues with whom I exchange experience. I have big plans relating to new forms of criminality,



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neuroscience, and psychoanalysis. I'd like to write a book on the phenomenon of identification and the reason that people follow some people but not others, and what mechanisms are at work there. Psychoanalysis is important here, because you can't analyse society if you don't

know how an individual functions when influenced by unconscious mechanisms and various fantasies, what we think others think of us and what is socially acceptable. You can't analyse that if you're not familiar with psychoanalysis, which first discovered the unconscious. ●



ECONOMIC GROWTH ONCE AGAIN DRIVEN BY EXPORTS

Exports could reach pre-crisis levels by the beginning of next year

Vesna Bertonec Popit, Delo Photo STA

THIRD-QUARTER GROWTH FIGURES FOR THE SLOVENIAN economy will not be available until the end of November. As noted, however, by Boštjan Vasle, the director of the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (Umar), Slovenia's recovery from the crisis is proceeding considerably more slowly than that of other Eurozone countries. The slow pace of recovery is due to, among other things, difficulties in the construction sector and the low technological level of Slovenian industry. Another factor is the credit crunch, which has still not eased, above all because of the significant weakening of Slovenian banks as a result of giving too many bad loans, in other words loans to companies that are unable to repay them.

It is however encouraging that Slovenian economic growth is once again being driven by exports. Umar analysts predict that at current growth levels exports could reach the pre-crisis level by the middle of next year. On the other hand better economic growth also needs domestic demand, which however has not yet revived. In the October issue of *Gospodarska gibanja*, published by the Economics Institute at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Law, Velimir Bole writes that household savings have increased greatly as a result of the crisis and have now reached an above-average level, just as in Austria, Belgium, Germany and, outside the EU, Switzerland. This, however, has pushed down economic growth, which is not being stimulated by tourism either, since tourism in Slovenia is mostly domestic. Meanwhile, the share of other services has not improved since the crisis and economists forecast that this will be the case for at least another six months.

As a result of the increased number of bankruptcies, the number of registered unemployed broke the 100,000 barrier at the end of October and now stands at 102,000. With a number of other companies still facing bankruptcy, this number could increase further. One recent casualty has been the Velenje-based construction company Vegrad, despite initially having filed for composition. If everything turns out as it should,

Naklo-based retailer Merkur will also enter composition. Since, however, composition legislation is not very friendly towards creditors, few companies enter composition and many more file for bankruptcy. Should this scenario come to pass in the case of Merkur, several thousand people would lose their jobs.

It is not all bad news, though, and a number of companies are once again doing very well, among them the Novo Mesto-based carmaker Revoz. Having provided financial support for Renault's investment in Revoz's Novo Mesto factory for the assembly of the French marque's Twingo and Wind models, Slovenia is also expected to provide assistance in the case of Revoz being chosen by the partnership of Renault-Nissan and Daimler to build a four-seat version of the Smart. Although word at the Ministry of Economy is that it is too early to be talking about State aid, some sources claim that support for this investment to the tune of €22.5 million is being considered. In the case of Renault's investment in production of the Twingo, the State contributed €38.5 million, with a further €12.9 million for the Wind.

The possibility of a new production contract at Revoz is also keenly anticipated in Slovenia's car industry cluster, which is counting on new business for Slovenian suppliers. According to Revoz figures, 5,000 jobs depend directly on the company's production activities, with a further 20,000 indirectly dependent jobs in the sector. Production of the Renault Smart is expected to start in 2013, with an electric version also planned.

Under the succession agreement covering the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia is entitled to 14 % of the foreign property formerly held by Yugoslavia. Prime Minister Borut Pahor, in Indjija, Serbia to open the region's largest galvanising plant, which is also Slovenia's biggest investment in Serbia this year, commented that by September next year Slovenia should have taken over the embassy residences in Rome and Milan. Slovenia has also obtained diplomatic premises in Washington and Klagenfurt under the succession agreement.

Serbia was Slovenia's tenth most important foreign trade

partner last year and the first of its investment targets. Slovenian investments in Serbia are worth €1.7 billion and have created 20,000 jobs in Serbia. Approximately 1,500 Slovenian companies are registered in Serbia, and trade between the two countries reached €794 million last year and €427 million in the first six months of this year, with exports worth €261 million and imports worth €166 million.

The government has frozen public sector pay rises. Some public sector unions have signed an annex on this, while others have refused to and are announcing legal action in order to obtain a third of the wage increase. Public sector trade unions have threatened to resume their strike, despite the extremely negative public reaction and the fact that, as they themselves have admitted, they achieved nothing by it.

The civil initiative headed by the economist Rado Pezdir has succeeded in getting power companies to agree to refund customers for overpriced electricity following an illegal price hike. Following a resolution by the Competition Protection Office, Rado Pezdir's civil initiative has also turned its attention to banks that have illegally charged higher fees to the customers of other banks for the use of its cash machines. Most of the banks have decided to refund the money, while others – confident that not everyone will sue them for a refund – have not.

Management consultants A. T. Kearney have recently published a ranking of the biggest companies and banks in SE Europe. Fourteen Slovenian companies appear among the 100 largest companies in this part of Europe, with Mercator and Petrol the two highest-ranked entries from Slovenia. The number one bank in SE Europe in 2009 in terms of balance sheet was NLB of Ljubljana, and the list of the 100 biggest banks included 18 Slovenian banks. Insurance company Triglav topped the chart of biggest insurance companies by gross written premiums, which included four Slovenian insurers in the top ten.

After the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia sent property owners a trial estimate of the prices of their property, which will subsequently be the basis for property tax, they received tens of thousands of objections because of a wide variety of errors. At the request of the government, the deadline for submitting objections to the estimates received for property, which in some cases was even assigned to the wrong owners, has been extended from 25 November to 25 January. The planned date for the introduction of the property tax is 2012, but experts consider that in view



Boštjan Vasle
Director of the Institute of
Macroeconomic Analysis
and Development



Dejan Židan
Agriculture, Forestry and
Food Minister

'Prime Minister Borut Pahor, in Indjija, Serbia to open the region's largest galvanising plant, which is also Slovenia's biggest investment in Serbia this year.'

has also undergone its first parliamentary reading, though with a large number of comments. The proposed reform, which would raise the retirement age to 65 and increase years of service to 43 for men and 41 for women, has also met with objections from the small business community, although their reservations are different from those of the unions. They are particularly unhappy about the significant increase in the insurance basis for self-employed people who have paid the lowest possible contributions to the pension fund, something which is of course subsequently reflected in their pensions. Labour, Family and Social Affairs Minister Ivan Svetlik commented that the State must provide for the secure old age of all generations. If people do not pay for social security, said the minister, they will sooner or later become a burden on the national budget and on taxpayers. The government has also announced an agricultural reform which on the one hand is designed to protect agricultural land from overgrowing and being built on while, on the other, placing the quality of life of farmers on the level of that of people working in the fields of industry, science and culture, the service sector and other sectors. Agriculture, Forestry and Food Minister Dejan Židan emphasised that agricultural land should once again be divided into land that will be permanently protected and other agricultural land. The total area of permanently protected agricultural land is expected to be between 150,000 and 200,000 hectares. Agriculture and Forestry Chamber president Ciril Smrkolj has pointed out that the income position of farmers has worsened considerably since Slovenia joined the European Union.

In October's mayoral elections, the incumbent mayors of Slovenia's largest cities all secured re-election. With the poll victory of Ghanaian-born doctor Peter Bosman, the coastal town of Piran elected the country's first black mayor. ●

of the parliamentary elections due in 2012 this deadline could also be extended.

The bill on so-called mini-jobs has had its first reading in parliament. The bill relates to work that was previously mainly performed by students in order to help finance their studies, while also providing work for other groups of people, particularly the unemployed and pensioners. It is claimed that this has worsened employment opportunities for students, giving an unfair advantage to students whose parents are able to support them. As a result, the students' organisation is threatening a referendum. The referendum would apparently also include the draft pension reform, which



SUN RONGMIN

The two sides should maintain high-level visits, consultations and exchanges at all levels

中国与斯洛文尼亚于1992年5月建交以来，两国关系发展顺利。双方保持密切往来，相互了解加深。斯历任总统、总理均访问过中国。中国不少重要领导人也来到过斯洛文尼亚这个美丽的欧洲国家。我今年到任后，有幸于6月陪同帕霍尔总理访华，见证了高层互访对双边关系发展的重要推动作用。

中斯两国经贸合作稳步增长。根据中方统计，2008年双边贸易额首次突破10亿美元，是建交初期的近80倍。去年因受国际金融危机影响，贸易额下降，但今年恢复增长，仅前三季度双边贸易额已达11.05亿美元。斯在华企业运转良好。

中斯两国文化、教育领域也有良好的合作。今年在上海举行的世博会是增进世界各国相互了解，相互交流的盛事。我非常高兴的是，斯洛文尼亚也参加了世博会。斯国家馆独特的设计与展示令人印象深刻。参观斯馆的人数达三百万人。这促进了中国民众对斯的了解与认识。我还想提两件对双边关系未来发展具有重要积极意义的事件。一是北京外国语大学正式开设了斯语课，中国的大学学生已经可以在北京学习斯洛文尼亚语。另一件是，今年卢布尔雅那大学孔子学院正式成立，为斯青年学习中国语言，了解中国文化开辟了新的途径。

中国愿与斯共同努力，继续推动中斯友好关系及中国与欧盟合作向更高水平发展。双方应继续保持高层互访和在各个层面的磋商与交流。中国经济的持续快速发展为外国企业提供新的巨大合作机会。中国政府欢迎外国企业来中国，也鼓励有实力的中国企业到国外投资。中斯双方在发展贸易的同时，应探讨扩大合作领域，促进相互投资的可能性，实现双赢。两国应扩大人文交流，双方充分利用丰富的文化资源，开展形式多样的文化交流活动。斯洛文尼亚和中国一样，都是理想的旅游目的地，无论是自然风景还是人文景观都值得一探。发展旅游具有很大潜力。

最后，我想说，中国是开放和友好的，诚挚欢迎大家有机会到中国来旅游、学习、经商。

Since China and Slovenia established diplomatic ties in May 1992, bilateral relations have developed smoothly. We have maintained close contacts, and deepened mutual understanding. All of the presidents and prime ministers of Slovenia in the time since have paid visits to China, while many high-level leaders of China

have also visited this beautiful European country. Shortly after assuming office in Slovenia this June, I had the honour of accompanying Prime Minister Borut Pahor on a visit to China, and witnessed the important role of this high-level visit in promoting our bilateral relations.

Economic and trade cooperation between our two countries have grown steadily. According to China's official statistics, the volume of bilateral trade in 2008 topped USD 1 billion for the first time, a figure

nearly 80 times higher than that at the time when diplomatic relations were established. The volume dropped last year due to the global financial crisis, but this year it has resumed growth once more. In the first three quarters of this year, trade has already reached USD 1.1 billion. Slovenian companies working in China are doing well.

In the field of culture and education, China and Slovenia also enjoy good cooperation. The World Expo held in Shanghai this year was a magnificent event enhancing exchange, communication and mutual understanding among all countries around the world. I am delighted that Slovenia took part in the event. The Slovenian pavilion's unique design and exhibition were highly impressive, and attracted over three million visitors. This event helped the Chinese people to get to know more about Slovenia and to understand the country better. I would also like to mention two important events for the future development of bilateral relations. One is that courses in Slovenian have now started at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, so Chinese students can now study the Slovenian language in Beijing. The other is that the Confucius Institute was formally established this year at the University of Ljubljana, offering a new path for people in Slovenia to learn the Chinese language and understand Chinese culture.

China would like to make joint efforts with Slovenia to continue the development of our friendship and cooperation, as well as that between China and EU. The two sides should maintain high-level visits, consultations and exchanges at all levels. The sustained and rapid development of China's economy provides foreign enterprises with new and significant opportunities for cooperation. The Chinese government welcomes foreign companies investing in China, and also encourages Chinese enterprises to invest abroad. While developing trade, China and Slovenia should expand the area of cooperation and explore investment possibilities, which offer rewards for both sides. We should deepen mutual communication, and make full use of our rich cultural resources to conduct cultural exchanges. The two countries also share great potential for development of tourism, as both are ideal destinations with attractive cultural and natural wonders.

Finally, I would like to say that China is open and friendly to the world. We sincerely welcome you to travel, study and do business in our country.

Sun Rongmin - Chinese Ambassador in Slovenia

“ THE SLOVENIAN PAVILION'S UNIQUE DESIGN AND EXHIBITION WERE HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE, AND ATTRACTED OVER THREE MILLION VISITORS. ”

“ WE CAN BE SATISFIED WITH TRENDS IN TRADE IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR, ALTHOUGH AN IMBALANCE REMAINS. SLOVENIA'S EXPORTS TO CHINA IN THIS PERIOD HAVE INCREASED BY 77% COMPARED TO THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR. ”

This letter is identical in Chinese and English.



MARIJA ADANJA

To bring China closer to Slovenia

I WAS VERY PLEASED TO BE ASKED BY THE EDITOR OF SINFO to contribute this month's Ambassador's Letter, since one of the important aims of my work, besides the promotion of Slovenia in China, is to bring this Asian country closer to Slovenia and tell people about the unlimited opportunities for cooperation that it offers.

Relations between Slovenia and China are extremely good and have been growing stronger ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Dialogue is continuous in all fields and at all levels. This year the Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor visited China with a large economic delegation. Visits by senior Chinese officials to Slovenia are in preparation, as is a visit to China by the presidents of Slovenia's National Assembly and National Council.

In times of crisis, like the present, it is of course natural to think first about commercial and economic cooperation. I firmly believe that there are many opportunities in this field to deepen and strengthen cooperation between Slovenia and China.

When we talk about China today, we tend to use superlatives: the world's second-largest economy, the world's biggest exporter and second biggest importer, the biggest car market, etc. All of this opens up new opportunities to strengthen trade and reciprocal investment between our two countries.

We can be satisfied with trends in trade in the first nine months of this year, although an imbalance remains. Slovenia's exports to China in this period have increased by 77% compared to the same period last year. Slovenia's trade deficit could also be balanced by Chinese investment in Slovenia. Many opportunities exist, among them the expansion of the Port of Koper, through which a much larger share of Chinese exports to Europe could be directed. China has considerable experience in building rail infrastructure and is currently developing one of the most modern and fastest railway networks in the world.

There are already more than 30 Slovenian companies with branches or offices in China. The majority of them are satisfied with the level of business, although last year they too felt the economic crisis.

Tourism is another extremely promising field of cooperation. More and more Chinese are travelling to Europe, and Slovenia is an attractive destination, particularly in connection with some of its

neighbouring countries. Tourism also helps us get to know each other better and can contribute a great deal to strengthening other forms of cooperation between Slovenia and China.

EXPO 2010 in Shanghai saw Slovenia present itself very successfully to the international and Chinese public with a pavilion that was one of 11 recipients of a gold award for creative design. It was visited by more than 3 million visitors and I believe that many of them will also wish to see Slovenia at first hand.

Although we are currently devoting most of our attention to economic issues, cooperation in other fields, particularly the field of culture, is equally important.

Slovenians have always been interested in Chinese civilisation, culture and language. This is also demonstrated by the large number of students of Chinese enrolled at Ljubljana University's

Faculty of Arts. The recently inaugurated Confucius Institute in Ljubljana will offer new possibilities for learning Chinese and getting to know Chinese culture. Given that the Confucius Institute is located within the Faculty of Economics, which already enjoys close cooperation with the Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, I hope that it will also contribute to the promotion of economic cooperation between the two countries.

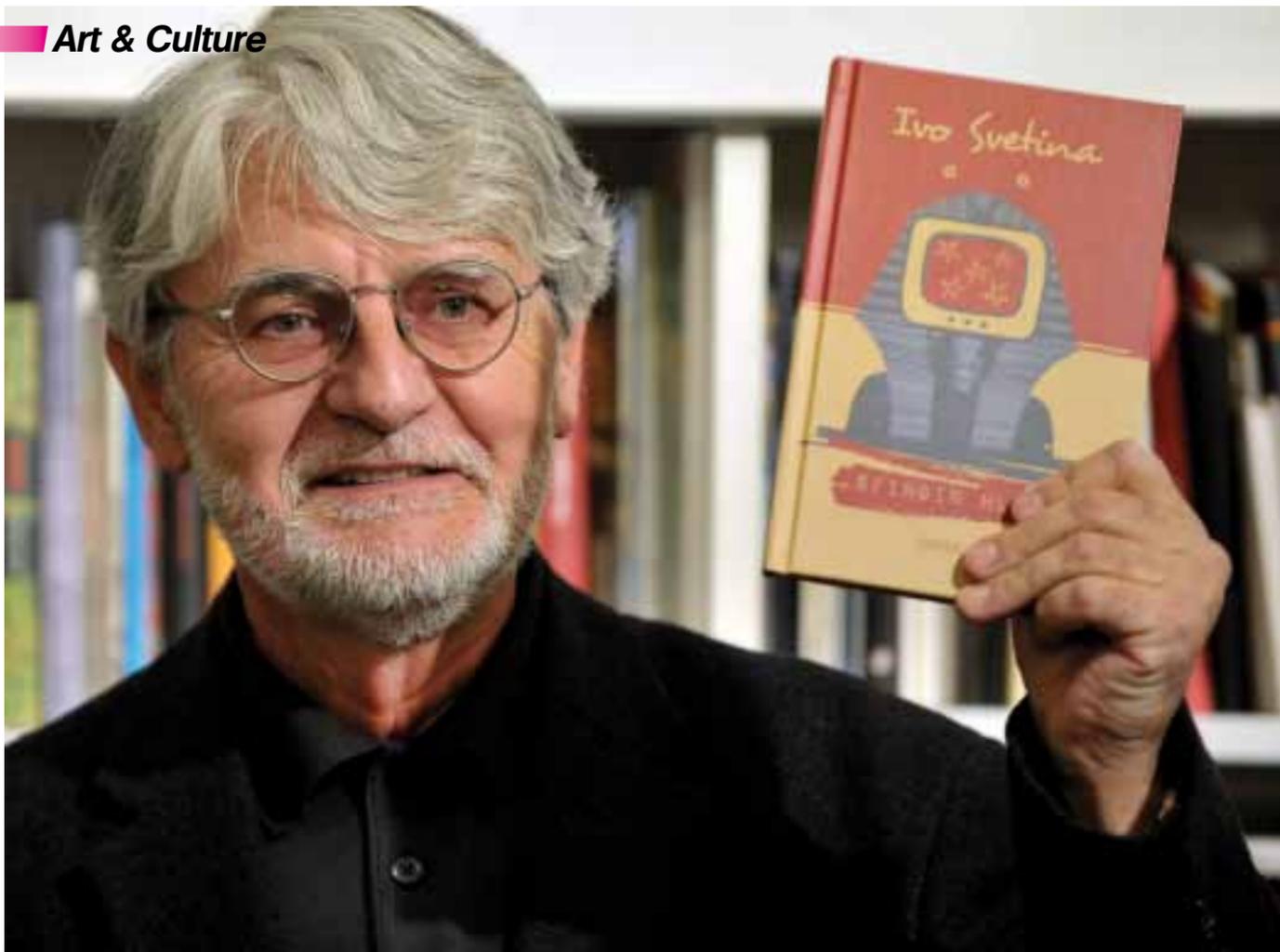
Meanwhile, Slovenian culture and the Slovenian language are also making inroads in China: a lectureship for the Slovenian language was created at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BeiWai) a year ago, and we hope to see the possibility of full-time Slovenian studies introduced in the near future.

China is also an increasingly important partner of the EU. Within this context too, Slovenia is committed to strengthening reciprocal understanding and trust and to deepening cooperation, both in bilateral relations and at the multilateral level, in particular in the search for solutions to global challenges such as the international financial and economic crisis, protection of the environment and climate change. In today's interconnected and interdependent world, cooperation and constructive dialogue is the only route to a better future for all.

Marija Adanja - Slovenian Ambassador in China

Photo: Personal archive

Photo: Personal archive



IVO SVETINA WINS THE JENKO AWARD

Jože Osterman Photo STA

IT IS SLIGHTLY SURPRISING THAT THE poet and journalist Ivo Svetina, an unmistakable presence in Slovenian literature for at least the last 45 years (ever since the appearance of the poets of the 441 Group in 1968), and therefore without a doubt one of the most recognisable Slovenian literary figures, should only now have won the Jenko Award for the best poetry collection for the first time. Svetina did in fact reach the shortlist last year, but this year his collection *Sphinx's Stable* beat the other four finalists and won the award. His poetic oeuvre now includes 25 poetry collections.

Sphinx's Stable contains 50 poems which differ considerably from Svetina's earlier poetry and could be said to

represent, to a certain extent, a kind of taking stock of the poet's life. Svetina, too, has grown a little older. Now that this extremely likeable human being and outstanding artist has passed 60, his willingness to set out all the experiences of his past is evidently much stronger than it was. Svetina thus turns his attention above all to experiences from his relatively early youth, without avoiding themes such as sex, drugs and alcohol, and throws the light of sincerity on them from today's much calmer perspective of wisdom and critical distance. This taking stock happens even to the wildest, most revolutionary ideas and actions he once espoused and put into practice, but he now exposes them to the judgement of the more universal

understanding that a person acquires with the passing of the years. A critical act of which only great spirits are capable. One of the members of the jury, Niko Grafenauer, himself the first winner of the Jenko Award, wrote that the collection boasts 'that existential experience which carries within itself the dark solidity of structure of both individual and historical time, in which human destinies of the most diverse provenances crowd together, clash, are redeemed and fall headlong.'

The Jenko Award for the best poetry collection of the last two years is given by the Slovenian Writers' Society and has been awarded 28 times to date. Last year the award went to the collection *Smugglers* by Aleš Debeljak.



LJUBLJANA SET FOR ITS FIRST REAL LABYRINTH – AN ART LABYRINTH

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Archive

THE LABYRINTH OF ART IS A special park uniting green city spaces with a traditional maze design, artistic creation and book-reading. It has been produced by the Exodos Ljubljana institute, sponsored by the City of Ljubljana as part of the project Ljubljana – World Book Capital. It is also supported by the Slovenian Ministry of Culture and the EU Culture Programme. The tree-planting event will take place at the labyrinth in the second half of November 2010 with the official opening planned for the end of April 2011.

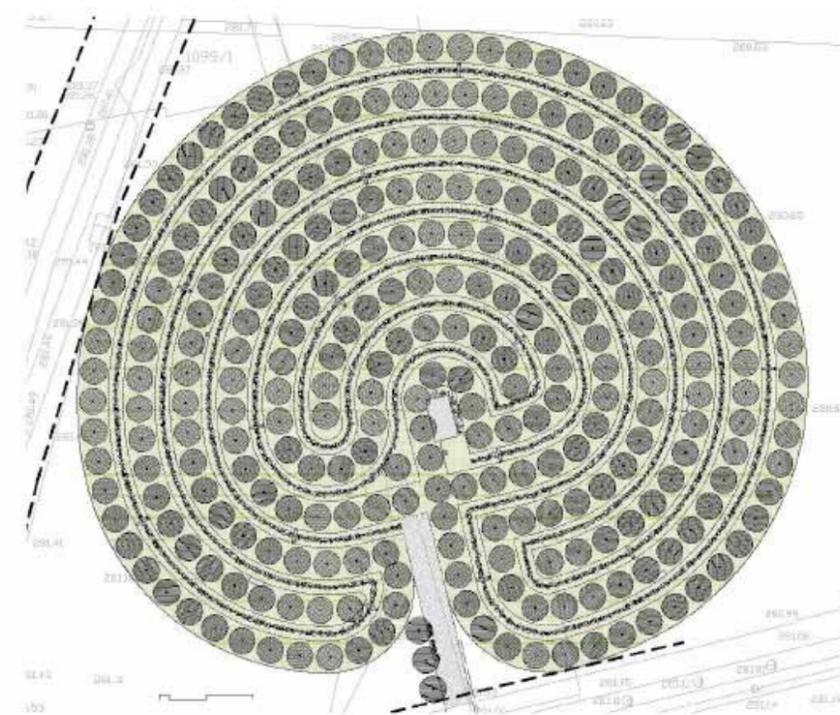
The idea for the LABYRINTH OF ART came from Bulgarian artist Venelin Shurelov, who tapped into the 4000-year-old tradition of maze creation. The earliest labyrinths had a one-way design (a twisting path leading from entrance to centre), their essence lying in the act of walking, where the walker approaches the essence, themselves. As an artist it was via the labyrinth that he first faced the challenge that in the long term he cannot affect his own creation, because it is co-created and adapted by nature. In addition to the walking, approaching the essence, one's self, in the LABYRINTH

OF ART there are also books, one of the main means of spreading knowledge and ideas between people. At the heart of the labyrinth there will be a reading island with a wide selection of books which visitors themselves will take part in creating. The path from the entrance to the centre will lead between 287 Canadian

hemlocks (an evergreen, coniferous tree with a lush, pyramid crown).

The LABYRINTH OF ART has already been recognised as a sustainable social and cultural project by many companies, cultural institutions and individuals – many have bought a tree and become a tree custodian.

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THANKS BELOW TRIGLAV

Ivan Martelanc Photo Archice Kamnik Municipality

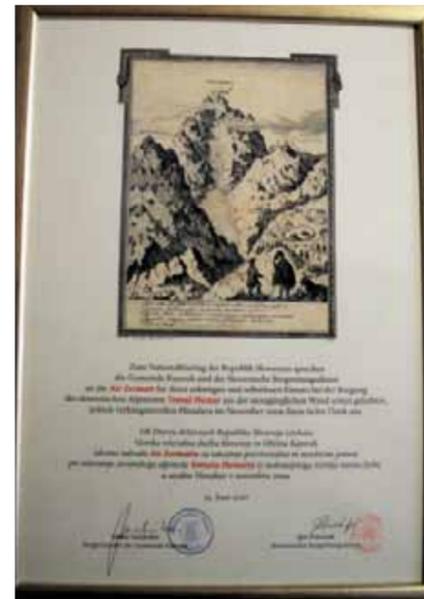
ON 16 NOVEMBER TWO REPRESENTATIVES of Air Zermatt, the Swiss helicopter rescue service, were presented with a certificate of thanks from the Mountain Rescue Service of Slovenia and the Municipality of Kamnik at a ceremony in the Slovenian Alpine Museum in Mojstrana, below Mount Triglav. The certificate is an expression of thanks to this service for their 'prompt, self-sacrificing and selfless assistance in the attempted rescue of Slovenian climber Tomaž Humar from an inaccessible rock face in his beloved but fatal Himalayas in November 2009.' The certificate was designed by the painter Lucijan Bratuš, a professor at the Academy of Fine Art and Design, who incorporated into it a replica of the first depiction of Triglav from 1776. The event, which we cover briefly in this issue, once again confirmed the truth of the comradeship, solidarity and courage that exist among people to whom mountains, steep faces and the conquering of them represent an irresistible challenge.

Air Zermatt, from the village of the same name below the Matterhorn, is one of the most effective rescue services in the world. They have an impressive

99% success rate and there is practically no mountaineer in difficulties that their rescuers are unable to reach. The comparison, from an American source, to 'a hand reaching down from the sky, like in a Baroque print, to rescue a soul at the edge of the abyss' also applies to Air Zermatt. They responded with lightning swiftness to the call from the Himalayas: 24 hours after being informed, in Zermatt, of the request from Slovenia for assistance for our missing climber, their three-member team had already arrived in Nepal. They found Humar shortly after the Nepalese helicopter took off, at an altitude of 5,600 metres on the 7,230-metre Langtang Lirun. Unfortunately they were too late to save him.

Forty-year-old Tomaž Humar of Kamnik was a member of the world's mountain-climbing elite. He completed over 1,500 ascents, including 70 first ascents. He received numerous awards, the most prestigious of them being the Piolet d'Or and the Gold Gentian for Lifetime Achievement, which he received along with Reinhold Messner and Sir Edmund Hillary.

Tomaž Humar remains in the Himalayas, which meant so much to



him, forever. His climbing comrades scattered his ashes below the mountain that proved fatal to him, as he himself would probably have wished.

The mountain rescue team from Zermatt were also received by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, in the presence of the Swiss ambassador to Slovenia and a number of Slovenian climbers notable for their exploits in Slovenia and the Himalayas. •

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BORŠTNIK RING

Hana Souček Morača

ON 24 OCTOBER, AS THE AIR FILLED with the smell of roasted chestnuts and the sounds of Fiddler on the Roof, the 45th Maribor Theatre Festival came to an end at the Slovenian National Theatre in Maribor with the traditional celebration.

The Borštnik Awards – national awards for plays, acting and lifetime achievement – are given at the end of the

festival, which this year boasted a wide range of festival activities, a children's programme, an international programme, an international conference on the theme of 'Intercriticism', an international symposium entitled 'Dramaturgy between Reality and Vision', and a varied accompanying programme.

The Borštnik Ring, Slovenia's most prestigious acting prize, which has been

awarded every year since 1970, found a new owner. The 'Lord of the Ring', as this year's winner was dubbed by the festival's artistic director Alja Predan, and fortieth member of the 'Fellowship of the Ring' was Janez Hočevar.

As the award citation stated, the history of the theatre shows that Janez Hočevar is a multifaceted actor with a gift for comic roles, although he has never

limited himself to a single genre. He is a kind of thespian homo universalis, something also demonstrated by his achievements in film and musical theatre, and has shown his talent as a singer in the operas Die Fledermaus and The Merry Widow and in the musicals Fiddler on the Roof and Nero.

Around 70 different events took place in the capital of the Štajerska region between 15 and 24 October, while the main competition programme consisted of 12 productions. The final decision of the expert jury gave five acting awards of equal value to: Uroš Fürst for the role of Lutz in SNG Drama Ljubljana's production of Private Life, Pia Zemljič for the roles of the Grandmother and Evica in Ptuj City Theatre's production of The Frogs, Janja Majzelj for the role of Sister Alma in Mini Theatre Ljubljana's production of Persona, Mateja Pucko for the role of the

Bride in Drama SNG Maribor's production of A Respectable Wedding and Jernej Šugman for the role of the Mother-In-Law in SNG Drama Ljubljana's production of When I Was Dead. The director's award went to Ivana Djilas for Private Life. Having analysed the Slovenian theatre productions presented at the festival, the expert jury decided, for the first time since the festival was founded in 1966, not to award the Grand Prix for the best play. They felt that the competition programme represented a broad and high-quality cross-section of creative approaches to the theatrical medium, but considered that there was a lack of fully unified approaches.

The play that won the most awards this year was Drama SNG Maribor's production of Closer. Eva Kraš was a popular winner of the young actress award, while the young actor award went to Uroš Kaurin. Dragutin Broz took the set design award,

and Tina Mahkota won the translation and linguistic adaptation prize. The prize for costume design was shared by Leo Kulaš for Closer and Alan Hranitelj for A Respectable Wedding, both productions of Drama SNG Maribor. The award of the Association of Theatre Critics and Researchers of Slovenia this year went to the Ptuj City Theatre's production of The Frogs directed by Jernej Lorenci. The team behind Damned Be the Traitor to His Homeland!, a production of the Mladinsko Theatre in Ljubljana, won the award for outstanding collective creation.

A special Maribor Theatre Festival diploma in this jubilee year, in acknowledgement of the regulation of legal status which allowed the festival to become an organisational unit of the Slovenian National Theatre, was awarded to the Minister of Culture Majda Širca and the Mayor of Maribor Franc Kangler. •



AWARD FOR THE FILM 'SLOVENIAN GIRL' AND ITS LEADING ACTRESS NINA IVANIŠIN

Jože Osterman Photo STA

AT CINESSONNE, THE PARIS FILM festival held in October, the Damjan Kozole-directed film 'Slovenian Girl' won two important prizes. The film won the best film award as voted by the public, and Nina Ivanišin won the festival's best leading actress award. This was Ivanišin's third international prize for this role, after she gained recognition at the Valencia film festival and the Les Arcs film

festival in France. The film is about a 23-year-old student who prostitutes herself using the name "Slovenian Girl," and has attracted attention from cinemagoers and expert juries alike. It has also already been shown on 50 screens abroad, and in September the European Film Academy based in Berlin put it forward for the 2010 European Film of the Year award, which bodes well for international

distribution. The film has played in Serbian in Dutch cinemas, and now is set to be distributed in around 20 European and North American countries. It has already been released on DVD in the US and Canada.

Nina Ivanišin, born 1985 in Maribor, is a promising film and theatre actress, currently member of Drama, the central theatre group of the Slovenian National Theatre in Ljubljana. •

MANCA JUVAN AND HER UNORDINARY LIVES

Polona Prešeren Photo STA



AFGHANISTAN: UNORDINARY LIVES' is the title of an exhibition of photographs taken by photographer and journalist Manca Juvan during her several visits to Afghanistan. She first went to Afghanistan at the tender age of 22, shortly after the fall of the Taliban regime. And she became a chronicler of some extremely critical moments, earned people's trust and became their confidante. She has also travelled and recorded her impressions in Iran, Pakistan and Venezuela. Manca Juvan is currently exhibiting her photographs at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. Publishing house Sanje has just published her book *Afghanistan: unordinary lives*.

What was it that interested her about Afghanistan? 'Afghanistan was a major world story at that time. People said that after the fall of the Taliban women would be emancipated. I wanted to see for myself,' explains Juvan, who before going to Afghanistan had mainly worked as a freelance photographer for a Slovenian women's magazine. 'I had always been interested in photojournalism and socially engaged photography, in injustice, in unpublished and remote stories.' Manca Juvan is interested in clichés and stereotypes and in minority groups. With

great sensitivity, she shatters clichés from behind the lens and shows people the other side of the story.

In Afghanistan she managed to photograph a women's prison. The first time she went there she entered the prison illegally with a female Afghan journalist who was reporting on the stories of some of the inmates for a Kabul newspaper. 'The second time, I went back officially, to talk to a guard, and got the opportunity to tell new stories through photographs. This was an extraordinary subject, because I gained an insight into a story which is often stereotyped and was able to see it more broadly.'

After Afghanistan she got involved in the stories of transsexuals in Thailand before setting off for Iran, which is also a kind of stereotyped country. Inspired by Chávez's talk of a new socialism, she headed for Venezuela. And since she was born too late for most of our own socialist period, she decided to research it there. She has also created a photo report on the Roma community in Slovenia.

Manca Juvan is a freelance photographer who also works for major foreign media. She notes that even in the media there is a financial crisis and a crisis of values. Media companies are increasingly disinclined

to publish stories on social themes. As a Slovenian citizen, she does not encounter any difficulties on her travels, since people in the countries she travels to are well aware of our Yugoslav past. She jokes that she lives in transit – she lived in Iran for a year and a half, and her work has also taken her to Thailand, New York, Paris and Ljubljana. She is about to return to Teheran and will certainly also be going back to Afghanistan.

If you are not able to visit the exhibition, all the photographs can be seen in the book *Afghanistan: unordinary lives*. Juvan says that with this book she wanted to show, through a photographic story, that war really is a terrible business with terrible consequences. War only ends for those who die in war. Meanwhile, the consequences of a war continue to be felt for generations. 'It is a kind of visual match against war. War makes me angry because it is always those who are not guilty of anything who suffer. But people keep living and have a strong will to live. With this book I want to present the stories of ordinary Afghans who are more or less overlooked and ignored, both by the Afghan authorities and by the international community.'

For more information:
www.mancajuvan.com

CIRIL KOSMAČ (1910–1980)

Albert Kos Photo STA

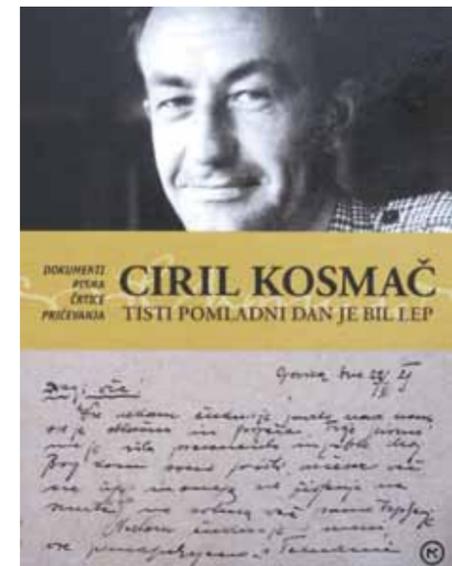
ANNIVERSARIES, PARTICULARLY 'round number' anniversaries, are an opportunity to remember events of the past and people whose work continues to mark the present even after they are gone. Among the latter, a special place is occupied in the consciousness of Slovenians, in particular those from the Primorska region, by Ciril Kosmač, a Slovenian writer with two such anniversaries this year: the 100th anniversary of his birth and the 30th anniversary of his death. For this reason, 'Kosmač Year' has attracted considerable attention in Slovenia.

Kosmač's works

Ciril Kosmač is among the most prominent Slovenian prose writers of the 20th century. A writer of the mid-20th century, his work is concentrated into the three decades from the beginning of the 1930s to the end of the 1950s, with the Second World War as a dividing line in his life and work. His oeuvre, which is not particularly extensive, is dominated by short prose pieces which, in one or two cases, are closer to the novel in terms of length and scope. All his works, however, are highly accomplished in expressive, linguistic and stylistic terms, and polished to perfection. For literary historians and theorists, Kosmač is a difficult writer to pin down, since his literary works elude rigid definition. In terms of both his origin and the themes he dealt with, he belongs to the generation of social realists. This initial orientation, however, did not prevent him from crossing over in his writing into fantasy and approaching more contemporary literary styles, although he was not a modernist. With his creative sensitivity, particularly in the years immediately following the Second World War, he broke through the rigid frameworks of Socialist Realism, in this way opening new creative horizons to his younger contemporaries – particularly since in terms of his own character and upbringing he was broadminded and cosmopolitan.

Thematic backgrounds of Kosmač's prose works

Two notable works by Kosmač are the novel *Pomladni dan* [A Spring Day] and the novella *Tantadruj*, both of which derive thematically from the village environment in which Kosmač spent his youth. The greater part of Kosmač's other novellas are also tied to this environment. Kosmač was born in the Primorska village of Slap ob Idrijci, in that part of Slovenia which, following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War, was assigned under the 1920 Treaty of Rapallo to the Kingdom of Italy, soon to come under Fascist rule, and thus separated from the rest of Slovenia, which became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Among the Slovenians of Primorska there was spontaneous resistance to the Rapallo border and Italian Fascism from the very beginning. During the interwar period the Fascist authorities used brutal measures to try and crush the national consciousness and identity of Slovenians in Italy. This spontaneous resistance became organised action in the form of the illegal TIGR movement. Kosmač was involved in the work of this organisation while still a schoolboy and was arrested by the Fascist authorities and accused of terrorist activity. Because he was still a minor, however, he was acquitted at the 'Trieste Trial' which resulted in the condemnation to death and subsequent execution of four Slovenian patriots. Shortly afterwards, in 1931, Kosmač fled to Ljubljana, where he worked in organisations of Slovenian emigrants from the areas occupied by Italy after the First World War. He was also active in politics and journalism and as a writer. Towards the end of the 1930s he travelled to Paris on a scholarship from the French government. There, immediately before the start of the Second World War, he worked at the Yugoslav embassy before spending most of the war in London as an editor of Slovenian broadcasts for the BBC World Service. Before the end of the war he joined the partisans in Yugoslavia. After the war he worked as a journalist and newspaper editor and as a writer and consultant at Triglav Film,



then the Slovenian state film company. He spent the last two decades of his life in Portorož, where he devoted himself to his writing. Even during his lifetime he was an undisputed literary authority. In 1961 he was elected a full member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Kosmač and Slovenian cinema

Kosmač's works have been translated into some 20 languages, making him one of the most translated Slovenian authors. Also particularly notable is his work as a screenwriter, with screenplays based on his novellas. Through this work he was one of the founders of Slovenian cinema and among those responsible for its subsequent development. He wrote the screenplay for the first post-war Slovenian feature-length film *On Our Own Land* (1948), which was also the first sound film made in Slovenia. Later he wrote the screenplay for *The Ballad of the Trumpet and the Cloud* (1961), while the film comedy *One Fine Day* was based on one of his works.

Commemorative events in 'Kosmač Year'

A series of commemorative events have taken place this year, shedding light on Kosmač's work from new points of view. Slovenska Matica dedicated a symposium to him at which participants presented various views of his work. Documents, sketches and testimonies revealing new aspects of Kosmač's life and work were published in book form for the first time. ●

EUROPEAN RECOGNITION FOR HEAVEN IN A BLACKBERRY BUSH

Hana Souček Morača Photo STA

INSTEAD OF A BICYCLE SHE BOUGHT apples. Three kilos, twelve apples, and the fruit-seller laughed along with her cape. When it rains they taste better. In Amsterdam at three o'clock raindrops fell across the world and over the cape. Puddles grew across the bridges and over the market. By the canal, thieves were selling bicycles. Bike, bike. Instead of a bicycle she bought apples.'

The 'novel in stories' Heaven in a Blackberry Bush by the young Slovenian author Nataša Kramberger was among the eleven winners of the EU Prize for Literature announced at the opening of the 62nd Frankfurt Book Fair. Slovenia's presence at the event was organised by the Slovenian Book Agency.

This edition of the Frankfurt Book Fair, which takes place in October each year, hosted over a hundred exhibitors. This year the fair also focused on new technologies in the world of books. Slovenia was present at the event with thirty publishers and twelve writers: Boris Pahor, Svetlana Makarovič, Slavoj Žižek, Miha Mazzini, Milan Dekleva, Andrej Blatnik, Vlado Žabot, Maja Novak, Nataša Kramberger, Suzana Tratnik, Katarina Marinčič and Mojca Kumerdej.

The EU Prize for Literature, which aims to draw attention to new talents and to promote the publication of their books in different countries, is awarded by the European Commission, the Federation of European Publishers, the European Booksellers Federation and the European Writers' Council. The prize was first awarded in 2009. This year the winning authors received their prize from Androulla Vassiliou, the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, during a ceremony in Brussels on 18 November.

The Slovenian winner Nataša Kramberger, born in 1983, appeared on



the domestic literary scene with her debut novel Heaven in a Blackberry Bush, published in 2007 by the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities as the winning entry at the Urška Festival of Young Literature. The following year the novel was among the five nominees for the Kresnik Award for the best Slovenian novel, presented each year by newspaper publisher Delo.

After studying in the Netherlands, Nataša Kramberger moved to Berlin. She also spends a lot of time in Trieste and Milan. She says that she is at home in Europe. As well as writing prose, she dedicates herself to journalism, poetry and theatre.

'Associations seem to me to be the most natural way of understanding the world. Such fragments are far more intense, more intensely felt, more sensuous, because they are short and do

not need explanation. Perhaps closer to the reader's stomach than to the brain.' This is how the young author explained her view of the world in a recent interview, adding that she wants to talk about the world, about details, because she believes that it is precisely the details that give charm to everything around us.

Besides financing the Prize itself, the Culture Programme of the European Union will co-finance translations of the winning works into several European languages. As the website of the Prize explains, the winning authors were selected by national juries in Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The participating countries change each year, which means that over the course of three years all 35 countries eligible for the Prize will take part.



ENTREPRENEURS OF THE YEAR

Marjeta and Marino Furlan

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Šimen Zupančič

“ YOU CANNOT JUST WAIT FOR OTHERS TO HELP YOU, YOU HAVE TO HELP YOURSELF. IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES WE HAVE IMPOSSIBLE PAYMENT DEADLINES TO MEET, BUT EVEN SO WE ARE WORKING WELL. WE ARE CONSTANTLY LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS, NOT PROBLEMS, AND WE DON'T GIVE UP EASILY. ”

YOU CANNOT WORK WELL IF YOU ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC, if you do not believe in your work and in good results,' say husband and wife Marino and Marjeta Furlan, the winners of the jubilee 20th Entrepreneur of the Year award for 2010. The Furlans are the founders and owners of advanced lighting solutions company Intra Lighting of Miren, near Nova Gorica. The award is given by Podjetnik magazine and the Chamber of Crafts and Small Business of Slovenia.

Boldness and confidence are what guide them in life: 'You cannot just wait for others to help you, you have to help yourself. In these difficult times we have impossible payment deadlines to meet, but even so we are working well. We are constantly looking for solutions, not problems, and we don't give up easily. Despite the economic crisis, we are investing more and reducing costs. We have doubled our investments in the market and are investing a great deal in the development of new products. In short, we are able to respond very quickly to the needs of the market – partly by working more for less profit.' »



The Furlans began making lights in their own flat just over 20 years ago. They had little experience and just one employee. Then they spotted an opportunity to supply lighting for shops, showrooms, shopping centres and other large premises. The real breakthrough for Intra Lighting came with the introduction of modular lighting systems enabling innovative and flexible lighting solutions.

The company began to grow quickly and expanded into the markets of the former Yugoslavia, where it acquired the Croatian company TEP, the second largest lighting manufacturer in the former federal republic, followed in 2008 by the Serbian company FEP. The Intra group today consists of three production plants and several subsidiary companies. The group generates an annual income of €25 million and employs 300 people.

In recent years the Furlans have been enhancing their product range with intensive innovation while at the same time taking into account modern energy-saving trends. When it comes to developing new products, they also collaborate with research institutions in Slovenia and Italy.

Marjeta and Marino Furlan have won this award above all for their successful realisation of an ambitious business strategy that steps outside the usual Slovenian context. They are proof of the fact that great enterprise stories can be born in Slovenia, too.

In the words of Prime Minister Borut Pahor, the government's view is that if enterprise is one of the forces that will enable Slovenia to overcome the challenges of the present crisis period, it is essential to give room to entrepreneurs who are seeking, with perseverance and courage, new answers to old and new questions – and to avoid placing obstacles in their way. The crisis has brought many changes, with more changes sure to come, but the best and the most enterprising will continue to win through. We therefore need to offer all support to innovative and dynamic entrepreneurs.

The most important thing about the annual selection of the country's most successful entrepreneurs is that it directs attention towards the most creative, dynamic and ambitious individuals without whom no society can be successful. It is

“MARJETA AND MARINO FURLAN HAVE WON THIS AWARD ABOVE ALL FOR THEIR SUCCESSFUL REALISATION OF AN AMBITIOUS BUSINESS STRATEGY THAT STEPS OUTSIDE THE USUAL SLOVENIAN CONTEXT.”

they who create the best quality jobs and give an impetus to the whole of the economy and society. Just a handful of these successful entrepreneurs could easily take the place of all the large enterprises that for a decade and more have been draining the State and, by failing to pay subcontractors, many micro and small enterprises too.

What distinguishes them from the competition?

There is no doubt that part of their success is due to a positive attitude, faith in their products, and a total commitment to work – since success demands the whole person. ‘We are always working. This has become our way of life. Our children are involved too. They have sales agents in France, Italy, Bulgaria, Canada and Dubai.’

When asked what it is that makes them different from others, the Furlans reply that it is probably their approach. They offer a complete service, not just the product itself. They pay a lot of attention to innovation in fitting, choice of materials and assembly of individual parts, all of which contributes greatly to

“THOSE WHO HAVE STARTED FROM NOTHING, LIKE US, KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO CREATE SOMETHING. WE HAVE LEARNT THAT YOU NEED TO INVEST CONSTANTLY, RATHER THAN MERELY SPEND.”

making servicing easier. ‘All our products are designed carefully, and above all they are innovative. Our software means that errors are eliminated. It is important to think holistically about how people work in a building, in order to avoid mistakes; how to handle the customer or developer, how to make suggestions. When you have grown as much as we have, there is no way back. The market is constantly forcing you to grow. This means that you are constantly having to develop new products to offer the

market. We sell between 20% and 25% of our lights at home. Those who have started from nothing, like us, know how difficult it is to create something. We have learnt that you need to invest constantly, rather than merely spend. If you are spending too much, something is going wrong.’

What does this award mean to them? ‘It is a very great honour. Naturally, the award is for everyone in the company: every single employee shares in the credit for our success.’

Given that a country's best brands are the products that give it a certain credibility and act as a guarantee, the people at Intra Lighting deserve particular support and thanks for the work that they do.



STEKLARNA ROGAŠKA

The elegance of glass

Polona Prešeren Photo Rogaška archives



Speaking at the Rogaška showroom in New York this October, Trump explained that his decision to work with Rogaška was influenced by the quality of the products and the professional attitude of the company.

ROGAŠKA SLATINA IS A LITTLE TOWN IN A PLEASANT valley in the middle of the Obsotelje region. Despite its small size it is famous for several world-renowned products and services. Rogaška Slatina boasts a thermal spring that is famous for the beneficial effects of its water; it is the location of one of the most prestigious spas in Slovenia; and it is home to a glassworks, Steklarna Rogaška, producing products of such refined elegance that they have found enthusiastic customers all over the world. Founded in 1927, the glassworks is today one of the leading producers of handmade, exclusive glassware. Over the course of its long history, Steklarna Rogaška has achieved a leading position among producers of top-quality handmade glassware, successfully exploiting its competitive advantages – chiefly design, supreme craftsmanship and rapid adaptability to changes – in markets around the world.

The Trump line

Steklarna Rogaška is a successful company which has recently signed an important deal in the USA. Through a tie-up with the American businessman Donald Trump, Slovenian crystal will now be sold under the Trump brand in the USA. Speaking at the Rogaška showroom in New York this October, Trump explained that his decision to work with Rogaška was influenced by the quality of the products and the professional attitude of the company. It may of course have helped that Trump's wife Melania is Slovenian. Donald Trump is well aware of the quality of Rogaška's products because he already uses them himself.

Rogaška currently does 50% of its business in the USA. The cooperation with Trump is for the time being focused on business gifts. A special range of crystal will be sold under the Trump Home and Trump Crystal Gifts brands, initially in the USA and then in Slovenia and around the world. Rogaška will be responsible for all production, which takes place in Slovenia, and also for packaging,

distribution and sales. It will make decisions on points of sale and the prices of products, which will initially range from \$25 to \$600 before later moving past the \$1000 mark.

Tradition

The glassworks in Rogaška Slatina is a symbol of tradition and the finest quality. The town's long glassmaking tradition is a guarantee that the glassmakers make skilful use of the raw materials that nature provides to create magically transparent glass, full of light, purity and sparkling beauty. It is a combination of creativity with the laws of nature and the properties of glass. To this masterly tradition, Rogaška has added state-of-the-art technology and contemporary design. The company collaborates with outstanding Slovenian designers, among them Tanja Pak, Oskar Kogoj and Jani Vozelj.

Just as the spa boasts a tradition dating back several centuries, so is the glassmaking industry in Rogaška Slatina based on the long tradition of forest glassworks that are described in historical records dating from at least 1665. These medieval glassmaking workshops made objects for everyday use from clear and green glass and also from coloured, cut and painted glass and gilded glass. The advent in the 19th century of industrial glassworks using new sources of energy put an end to the old glassmaking workshops, which for the most part were located in forested areas.

Today's glassmakers, who skilfully employ modern techniques and technology, are still fascinated by the richly decorated and shaped products of their predecessors. All this proves that in this field there is always a human being in the foreground: the glassblower, the glasscutter. Handwork is the result of cooperation between the individual and the technique, yet even so the most valuable element is still expert experience.

Processes

Steklarna Rogaška produces two types of glass: lead crystal glass, >>

“**STEKLARNA ROGAŠKA HAS ACHIEVED A LEADING POSITION AMONG PRODUCERS OF TOP-QUALITY HANDMADE GLASSWARE, SUCCESSFULLY EXPLOITING ITS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES – CHIEFLY DESIGN, SUPREME CRAFTSMANSHIP AND RAPID ADAPTABILITY TO CHANGES – IN MARKETS AROUND THE WORLD.**”

which is later sold as polished or cut glass, and crystalline glass, which is sold in painted, polished or cut form. Glass products are created from a special mixture of quartz sand, calcinated soda, red lead, ash and calcite or limestone. To this basis, colourants or decolourants are added (for colouring or removing unwanted colours). The mixture is melted in furnaces at 1,450°C. Individual products are shaped in moulds made on the basis of a drawing. The glassmaker takes a small quantity of molten glass on the end of a glass pipe and then, by blowing into it, blows a bulb, the shape of which depends on the kind of product he intends to make. The bulb is the basis for taking a new portion of molten glass, which the glassblower shapes in the mould and, by blowing, forms into the desired shape. When the product has been blown and

the bottom made, the product, now at a temperature of 500°C, is ready for cooling. Cooling must take place slowly in order to avoid thermal stress which could cause cracking at later stages. Later, the cap of the product is cut off and the edges are cut and sealed. Lead crystal is decoratively cut by hand. Glasscutters used traditional (carborundum) cutting wheels of different degrees of fineness. Since 1972 diamond cutting wheels have also been used. Now all that remains is to polish the product, making it so clear as to refract light causing iridescent sparkles.

The trained hands of glassblowers and glasscutters give products a refinement that a machine cannot give them. Many shapes and patterns are the result of the creative and precise work of designers and all those who contribute to the final appearance and brilliance of the product during the various phases of production.

Many of the products of the Rogaška glassmakers achieve the level of works of art, and the effort of many skilled professionals is invested in them. Noble beverages are decanted into Rogaška products; gastronomic specialities are served in them; crystal candlesticks help create the atmosphere. For all moments and occasions.

In recent years Steklarna Rogaška has also produced precious crystal trophies for the winners of important sports competitions, notably winter sports such as skiing and ski jumping. They have also produced trophies for those chosen as sports personalities of the year. Recipients of trophies produced by the glassmakers of Rogaška include Michael Schumacher, Svetlana Khorkina, Björn Borg and many others. For more information: www.rogaska-crystal.com

Photo Branko Korelc - Kobra

TIME FOR WINE

Polona Prešeren Photo Alež Fevžer



NOVEMBER IN SLOVENIA IS A season of wine marked by the celebration of Saint Martin's Day, when, according to timeless custom, the must turns into wine. Martinovanje, as this celebration is known, is an event that brings good cheer and a joyful mood to the otherwise gloomy and rainy month of November. And there is no question that we Slovenians are great lovers of wine. We are proud of it and naturally believe that Slovenian wines are among the finest in the world. What else could you expect from a nation whose national anthem is a toast (to all people of goodwill – but the hint is surely obvious), and where the vineyard cottage (or even just a barrel of wine tucked away somewhere) is a common family hobby?

Martinmas, which falls on 11 November, is not just any old saint's day in wine country: it is a serious matter, a tradition

that requires festivities in honour of wine! It demands serious preparations and is traditionally celebrated with a roast goose, mlinci, red cabbage and of course young wine. Many Martinmas celebrations take place out of doors in towns and villages. This year there was a very enjoyable celebration on the streets of Ljubljana, including a Ljubljana Wine Route which I, as a researcher of flavours, could not allow myself to miss. The weekend before Saint Martin's Day, instead of going to the market, I strolled along the banks of the Ljubljanica. And instead of a shopping basket, I had a glass in my hands. Along the banks of the Ljubljanica, across the Triple Bridge, through Town Square and over the Shoemakers' Bridge, with a view of the Castle Hill, where vines grew in the days of ancient Emona.

During my stroll, a treat for my taste buds, I sampled young wine from each



of Slovenia's wine regions and tasted delicacies from various parts of the country – kaki (persimmon) cake, sweet Karst ham, goat's cheese... Winemakers and restaurateurs conjured up a wonderful atmosphere in the city with wine tastings and gastronomic delights. The Ljubljana Wine Route, organised by event managers Radost and Ljubljana Tourism, aims to make Ljubljana even more attractive to visitors and is a thoroughly enjoyable experience and

opportunity for socialising.

The Ljubljana Wine Route is, however, merely an introduction to the many wine and food events taking place in the capital. For many people the climax of the event is the Slovenian Wine and Culinary Festival, at which a large number of winemakers (this year there were 600 of them) offer the very best from Slovenia's vineyards every year. The food part of the festival presents the full variety of Slovenian cuisine by different geographical regions. Bruno Gaberšek, the secretary of the Association of Family Winemakers and Winegrowers of Slovenia, designed the culinary festival as a celebration of regional, local and traditional food prepared and served in a 21st-century spirit. 'These are local restaurateurs who prepare traditional food in a contemporary manner out of passion,' says Gaberšek. I sampled a variety of good things from the Dolenjska, Primorska and Prekmurje regions. The offerings from Dolenjska included an outstanding tlačenka (pressed pork in aspic) with pumpkin foam from Gostilna Vovko and smoked trout from the river Krka prepared by Domačija Novak. Chefs from Gostilna Rakar prepared their signature dish: fried pearl barley on porcini mushrooms with black radish – a true speciality of the region. The chefs of Briška Hiša in Primorska proposed simple local dishes from the Brda hills: hrvatica and papula (bean purée). Both were delicious. Still in Primorska, chefs from Slovenian Istria prepared an ombolo (boned pork loin) in a kaki sauce. The Prekmurje region was naturally represented by bograč, a traditional form of goulash.

A kaleidoscope of wine

With good food, wine is a revelation. And vice versa. Slovenian wines were excellently represented in the wine section of the festival. In wine terms, Slovenia is part of the Old World, with a number of French, Italian and German influences, both in the vineyards and in production. When it comes to wines, the story behind them is almost as important as their combination with food. Whether it is carefully sealed in the most luxurious bottle or simply stored in an oak barrel, each wine has its own story



'The Ljubljana Wine Route, organised by event managers Radost and Ljubljana Tourism, aims to make Ljubljana even more attractive to visitors and is a thoroughly enjoyable experience and opportunity for socialising.'

and past. Not in the sense of the burden and weight of history, but in terms of the idea of the winemaker, the vine, the soil, the wood. It is about the glass and our connection with it. I discovered many different stories at the festival.

'Good wine needs no bush'

...goes the saying. Perhaps that is why Slovenian wines are available in the world's finest restaurants. You can read about them and about Slovenian winemakers in specialist publications that are considered opinion makers in the world of wines such as Wine Spectator, Decanter and Wines & Spirits. The biggest star in the wine firmament is without a doubt Movia, which Wines & Spirits magazine this year included among its top 100 Wineries of the Year. Movia and its charismatic owner Aleš Kristančič are present all over the world and are genuine stars in California and in New York, where their wines appear on the wine lists of the best restaurants. They also have their fans in China, where one Chinese enthusiast has recently opened eight Movia wine bars. Other

Slovenian wines popular in the USA include the Pullus range and red wines from Santomas.

It was from Santomas that I learnt many interesting things about how wine is made. How it is matured in casks in which other wine has already matured, and what this means for its flavour. How they change the corks so that wines can age for longer. And another thing that fascinated me: Santomas has its own wine bank. If you buy Santomas wine that is suitable for ageing, they will store it for you in their bank under optimal conditions. Santomas wines are available in the UK and the USA. The winery exports as much as 40% of its production.

The light and fresh wines from the Verus and Marof cellars, currently something of a trend, are popular in the United Kingdom. The wine list of the Ritz hotel in London includes wines from Simčič, which are also very popular in Italy. The Japanese are keen consumers of wines from the Batič winery, which apparently go exquisitely well with sushi. Such is the enthusiasm for them in the Land of the Rising Sun that a Batič



sushi restaurant has even opened in the centre of Tokyo.

If for reasons of space I have not mentioned the successes of other winemakers, I hope no one is offended. The fact is, many of them are garnering extraordinary success around the world. Besides Simčič and Movia, these include other winemakers from Goriška Brda such as Edi Simčič, Ščurek and Jakončič; notable winemakers from the Vipava Valley include – besides Batič – Sutor and Mlečnik; as well as Santomas, Slovenian Istria has Rojac, while the Karst has Čotar; meanwhile in Štajerska there are, besides Verus and Pullus, the houses of Steyer and Johannes.

Wines were sampled and judged at the wine festival by a variety of different groups: a group of female wine lovers and connoisseurs; members of the Slovenian Order of Wine Knights; young lawyers; young winemakers; members of the Ljubljana Rotary Club; and members of the Wine Tasters' Club. An expert jury judged previous vintages, the oenologist Dr Mojmir Wondra explained. The winning wines chosen by the jury were: Zlata Radgonska Penina Extra Brut 2007 from Radgonske Gorice – a wine with wonderfully lively, sparkling bubbles and a delicate, lingering foam; Pullus Welschriesling 2007 from Ptujška Klet – a

Wine and football?

Yes, even Slovenia's winemakers have their own football team. This year's festival also included a return match between the official winemakers' eleven of Slovenia and their Hungarian counterparts. The Slovenian winemakers' side was founded three years ago and the results speak for themselves: Slovenia are currently the wine football vice-champions of Europe.

fantastic fruit aroma and a mature wine with outstanding golden colour; Cabernet Sauvignon Bagueri 2007 from Vinska Klet Goriška Brda – distinguished by its excellent character and ripeness. This • is a wine with a marmalade note ideally suited to robust flavours. The jury also singled out Steyer's Vaneja 2003. Visitors to the festival also have the opportunity to choose their favourite wine.

As regards trends and wines, everything is, of course, somewhat relative. While the time is always right for wine, tastes vary greatly. As do ratings. But this is not something that should concern us in the slightest: the most important thing is to follow your own taste. And to enjoy the entire spectrum of flavours and sensations.



Ljubljana Wine Route
Photo Katarina Krmelj



THE LJUBLJANA MARATHON

A world record in the next decade?

Andrej Stare Photo STA

THE LJUBLJANA MARATHON IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST sports/recreational events in Slovenia, with a participation that this year reached a record-breaking 19,647. The 15th marathon through the streets of Ljubljana outdid all previous editions in terms of both the number of participants and the level of interest from foreign runners.

Fifteen years ago, in 1996, 673 men and women took part in the first Ljubljana Marathon; this year there were nearly thirty times as many runners. The route through Ljubljana's streets is varied and enjoyable – and also enables excellent results. This year's winner, in less than ideal weather conditions (a strong side wind and occasional rain) was Tiruwork Mekonnen of Ethiopia, with a time of 2:37:16. This was also the first marathon win for distance-running superpower Ethiopia on the streets of the Slovenian capital.

The men's race around the 21-kilometre course (runners complete two laps for the total marathon distance of 42,195 metres) was a real treat, dominated this year by the excellent Kenyans. Among the athletes from 50 countries and every continent, 26 were from Kenya, a country which produces some of the world's best marathon runners. After a first lap that was not among the fastest, 25-year-old Evans Ruto really shone on the second lap and won the race in 2:10:17, a time just 5 seconds slower than the course record set by his countryman Biama in 2009. His winning time made the Ljubljana Marathon the 24th fastest marathon in the world in 2010, which is an important step forward. Ruto took the lead at kilometre 35, continued to push hard and beat his countrymen Tarbei and Lomala to the finish by 27 and 38 seconds respectively. Ten of the first eleven finishers were from Kenya, with fifth-placed Antoneko of Ukraine the only runner able to keep up with the outstanding Kenyan team. The top-finishing Slovenian runner this year was Mitja Kosovelj (a well-known mountain runner), who finished 12th with a time of 2:24:33. The characteristics of the Ljubljana course are such that times around the 2 hours and 4 minutes mark would be possible if the organisers succeeded in attracting the world's top marathon runners. The Ljubljana course is similar to those of London, Berlin and Rotterdam – the fastest marathons in the world. The current world record is held by Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia, with a time of 2:03:59 set on 28 September 2008 in Berlin.

According to Ljubljana Marathon director Gabrijel Ambrožič, who is also a technical delegate of the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations), the Ljubljana Marathon is growing in importance from year to year even in international terms. Ljubljana is now a fixture on the calendar of autumn marathons and, with new sponsors, the Ljubljana Marathon could achieve previously unimagined development in terms of results over the next decade.

The marathon runners were very well prepared this year – not



only the professional runners but also the recreational runners who filled Ljubljana's streets. Running is becoming an important form of recreation in Slovenia and reflects people's interest in a healthy lifestyle. The total number of participants in the Ljubljana Marathon increased by over 20% compared to last year. The oldest female runner this year was 82-year-old Helena Žigon, who ran the half marathon in a time of 2:39:02. The oldest male runner was 79-year-old Adolf Križner, who completed the half marathon in 2:05:03.

As well as the full marathon (42,195 metres), the event included a half marathon, which also attracted a large number of participants. Taking advantage of good weather conditions, many runners achieved their own personal best times. The men's winner, Primož Kobe (Slovenia), broke the record for the Ljubljana course with a time of 1:04:55. Among the competitors in the half marathon was Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor, who crossed the line 1719th with a time of 1:46:24. His arrival at the finish attracted considerable attention from the media of over 20 countries. Mr Pahor gave a brief statement after completing his run: 'Here, everyone who reaches the finish is a winner. Running is part of my life and without it I would feel poorer.' The Prime Minister's words also sum up what this event is about – a race for everyone, a race to the measure of every marathon runner. Results, classifications and times are of secondary importance. The essence of running is a healthy life, a life with less of the stress caused by the hectic rhythm of modern living. Running is a physical activity that makes people happy and ensures their mental and physical fitness into middle age and beyond.

This year's Ljubljana Marathon was followed by an estimated 150,000 spectators lining the avenues and streets of the Slovenian capital and cheering on the runners along the entire route. Spectator numbers at the 15th Ljubljana Marathon are further evidence that this event is becoming increasingly firmly rooted in the consciousness of the citizens of Ljubljana and running enthusiasts throughout Slovenia. At the end of the event, the runners shook hands and shouted in unison: 'See you next year at the 16th Ljubljana Marathon – Ljubljana 2011!' •



ARCHITECT
JANI VOZELJ
Designer of Space

Polona Prešeren
Photo Personal archive



BUSINESS PREMISES IN MACEDONIA, a fitness centre in Ljubljana, salesroom and glassware design for the Rogaška glassmakers, hotels in Croatia and Slovenia, and the renovation of Hotel Grad Otočec – these are just a selection of projects by the architect Jani Vozelj. Vozelj is a great lover of all that is beautiful and design-related, but the main theme of his work is space. His architecture follows a carefully arranged story, it is the symbiosis of the elements that all his projects strictly respect.

“Architecture is the design of space,” says the architect, Jani Vozelj. “Because I take a general approach, I create a space that is entirely the product of my creative intent.” When he designs a building, he places it within a micro-space based

on the analysis of the broader space and respecting the properties and characteristics of the environment. He finds the placing of architecture in space to be of immense importance, supplementing and co-shaping it with new form and content. “In the end you should always add a creation to a space by respecting the elements of the existing space, establishing logical communications, criteria and structures, in effect creating a symbiosis between the existing and the new. New content provided by investors and defined by the architect’s created space must live within the context of a broader space, in the sense of supplementing the existing qualities of that environment. Architecture created in this way must of

course provide its users and passers-by with content that reflects the needs of modern life, as well as a form that is the fruit of the architect’s internal creation, presented in a visible, external form.”

Jani Vozelj was one of the first in his year when he graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana. “I just found it boring,” he recalls. He felt a need for the new and genuine creative challenges. He has now been working over 20 years in the field of architecture, and has his own studio, employing ten architects. “Over all this time working in architecture and design I have reached conclusions on which I base my creativity. All creation begins and ends with respect for a natural order. Proportions and geometry are my means of expression. They restrict you and liberate you at the same time, because objects and spaces designed like this communicate by being interdependent, interactive and in proportion.” Cubism is a further element in the architecture of Jani Vozelj. He is constantly involved in composing something new, concepts liberated from all else.

Vozelj’s creations offer a summary of fundamental structures. “I recognise that the final form is only in harmony, if the basic elements are part of a constructive dialogue.” His creations pay homage to tradition and the past. “I attempt to link past, present and future in a comprehensible way.” Here once more are the elements of nature and symbiosis. “It is important that apparent opposites are brought into harmony with every element of a space.” And he attempts to crown everything with the element of beauty. “That is a touchstone of design. Fullness, harmony, discipline and liberation are crowned by beauty.”

The elements of Jani Vozelj’s architectural approach are clearly demarcated in his creative work. He places great emphasis on the clarity of architectural design. He recognises how important it is to respect the desires of the client; communicating with clients for a space is vital. Thought must also be given to how new content, and hence form, will affect the broader space. “Architecture must serve the client’s



Business premises project in Skopje, Macedonia.

need, and it must also be designed to suit the broader space,” Jani Vozelj explains. “Unless we have the symbiosis of all the most diverse elements that affect an architectural solution, we cannot speak of a quality product.”

Respect for nature

In addition to proportions and geometry, respect for the past, going beyond cubism and structuralist knowledge, introducing harmony of the element and seeking beauty, he also considers the perception of creating space in relation to nature to be an important part of architecture. “Respect for nature is automatic, it is a must and should be without compromise. It is an element I try to add to my work by conserving and finding a symbiosis with nature.” Materials are what bind everything together, and always form the basis for environmental protection. As Vozelj says, however, there is nothing wrong with artificial materials, such as artificial leather. They can be just as attractive as natural materials, and can easily replace them, almost being the same as the original. Technology has provided materials that are entirely capable of replacing natural materials. Of course, one must know how to use artificial materials correctly within a

given context.

The basis of colour combination is also seen in nature. Colours are very important, because people respond to them and sense them. They have their own character, some warm, some cool, some that rapidly capture our attention. That makes mastering colour and its correct presentation in relation to space extremely important, sometimes even essential. So what approach to colour speaks most to him? “I personally prefer

‘All creation begins and ends with respect for a natural order. Proportions and geometry are my means of expression. They restrict you and liberate you at the same time, because objects and spaces designed like this communicate by being interdependent, interactive and in proportion.’

a colour scheme that is not too attention-grabbing. That nothing within a space disturbs people. Rather than enticing people with colour, I think it is important that a space offers a neutral environment, where people feel comfortable and able to communicate with others at their ease.” What is important when addressing colour, space or an interior is the focuses

that colour can help us achieve. “Colour is a subtle creative element and I am very sensitive to the right colour selection. The colour scheme must be coordinated, from the broader concept as a whole right down to each and every detail.”

Architects incorporate the qualities of an environment into their solutions, working with them to produce designs in their own style. This is the key to creating a quality space. The question for architects is how to bring this all into a design. “For me, quality architecture is where the interior and the environment merge. Architects must sense the characteristics of an environment and allow them to flow into their creations. This is the key to how I create spaces that communicate inwardly and outwardly. Spaces connect and complement each other,” says Vozelj. It is important to have a design that offers people comfort and aesthetic beauty. This is what makes a space attractive.

Portfolio

“So you like designing hotels,” I wonder, given the hotels that feature in his portfolio. The hotel industry is so full of stories, and every hotel has its own.

Although a hotel is in some way an impersonal space, Jani Vozelj contends that it is a special space and very complex given the coming together of different contents, forms of communication, and artistic and aesthetic expectations. People must feel ‘at home’ in a hotel. When planning a hotel it is important to know who we are planning the hotel for, what kind of guest, the level of quality or number of stars that give it its character are important. “To achieve attractiveness and functionality we must respect the environment in which the hotel is found. A guest coming from far away, for example, to the seaside, expects the experience of the broader environment to be carried in some way into the interior. “We must offer guests a space they can use with ease, that they can navigate without problems, where



they can find their own corner, engaging them with attractive elements, because they have come to a space with a certain set of expectations.”

Jani Vozelj also works on new projects offering complete artistic control, such as renovations. Every job is a new challenge. But as he says, “starting a new project is always exciting, because you create a fundamental space that you can design down to the last detail. You can come up with a space that communicates in every direction, in the vertical, in the horizontal, in the sense of functional content and the internal and external context of the micro and macro-space. You must correctly position the space in line with the environment, the views, the aspect and the position of the sun. That makes it easier to achieve the desired result.” Conversely, reworking an existing space involves vital communication with what is already there, respecting existing elements and developing them with new content.

At present, his studio is working intensely on its own collection of furniture, lighting, rugs and carpets, and smaller decorative elements. The collection is defined by all the ideas that Jani Vozelj has developed over all his projects. “In the past I approached each space as a one-off. Over all these years of work at the studio, I have produced various collections. My own collection offers me the opportunity of designing up from the very smallest item to the overall

image of a space. These smaller objects represent a form of micro-architecture.” For Jani Vozelj it is important that not everything is subordinate to just one guideline and form.

His studio is currently working on renovating the Hotel Grad Čatež, and a hotel at Bernardin, Portorož, while they are also preparing a renovation project for the Sheraton hotel in Zagreb, and planning a residential building in Ljubljana. Each project, from the original concept, project preparation, acquiring permits to starting and finally concluding the work takes on average from three to four years. They often work together with other studios.

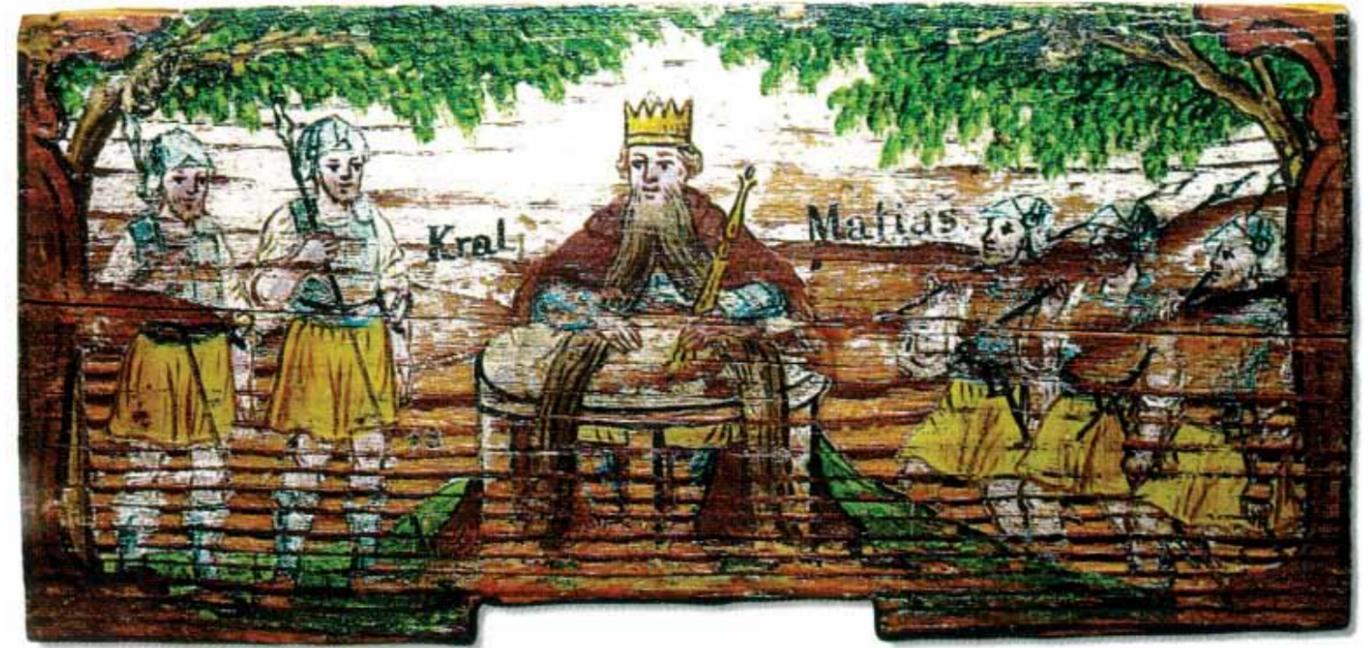
Just last month they finished a project in Skopje, Macedonia, which was particularly special for Jani Vozelj. The project involved business premises, which Vozelj planned in an L-shape. “I created a small square in front of the building that can serve a variety of purposes, while the building itself featured a small gallery.” This gave the project added value, enabling other events to take place in addition to business, linking the original business function with activities in the narrower and broader environment of the city. The business facilities can therefore transcend their business function and engage with cultural and social dimensions. The premises are rather different, almost unique due to being black. Jani Vozelj selected this deliberately, because as a neutral colour

black is very suitable for such architecture. By using a neutral colour scheme the architect offers a benefit to the user, since business takes place between people and he has created an architecture that does not intrude on that with a bright colour scheme. The functional content is part of a geometrically and proportionally simple form characterised by a logically constructive rhythm, as demonstrated by the façade. The functional balconies, added to the façade to link the interior and exterior, were designed with varied elements embodying broken forms that give the building a sense of dynamism and animation appropriate to the business world and also offer a sense of grandeur, expressed in the gilded details that set off the façade’s neutral colour scheme.

The overall project also included furnishing the lobby, which adds a sense of completion to the project and created a symbiosis between the interior and exterior. This is felt through the colour scheme and the graphics that visually assuage the glass surfaces and is captured by the lines of the balconies and elements of the square. A feature of the building is the dynamically placed bridges linking parts of the L-shape building that symbolise its business function. A series of designed objects are also located throughout the building to supplement the overall design of the space.

And what does he find particularly important in his creative work?

That a space is correctly designed, respecting all the elements of the architectural concept and planned for specific functions. The senses are vital – sight, hearing and touch which must be engaged within the space. Light is particularly important, with its ability to add its magic to a space. “I attempt to create a space with diversity, functions and forms that together create a symbiosis.” That means that the collections he designs also add to this blend of diverse forms, as he attempts to create a relaxed and unencumbered architecture. “I am proud of products that I feel are still high quality even after twenty years, and contain all the elements that form the foundations of my projects.”



MYTHS AND FAIRYTALES OF SLOVENIA

Dr Monika Krojež Photo Archive Institute of Slovenian Ethnology ZRC SAZU

THE MYTHOLOGY THAT HAS survived and developed to the present day in Slovenia is the result of centuries or even millennia of changes, of movements of peoples and nations, and of different social and historical conditions. Myths are founded on archetypical concepts, and this is the reason that they have survived.

Cosmology

In creation myths, water symbolises the elemental material from which a new world is formed. Slovenian folk tradition conserved stories of the creation of the Earth from a grain of sand from the seabed. In 1858 Janez Trdina published (in the literary magazine *Neven*) a tale which narrates that in the beginning there was nothing but God, the sun and the sea. The sun was very hot so God immersed himself in the sea to bathe and cool down. When he returned to the surface, a grain of sand was caught in his nail. This grain of sand fell onto the surface of the sea and from it our Earth came into being.

Other folk songs and tales tell of how the floating Earth is supported by an enormous fish. When it moves, earthquakes occur. When it dives under the water, this causes the end of the world. This story is also the subject of a folk song about a fish called Faronika which could drown the world by moving its tail or turning over onto its back. The figure of Faronika in Slovenian folk tradition parallels similar mythical creatures such as the biblical Leviathan, the Midgard Serpent or World Serpent of Norse mythology, the Greek Hydra, the Babylonian Tiamat and so on.

Kurent, whose vine saved a man of Carniola from the Great Flood, is a mythological figure connected to

Myths are founded on archetypical concepts, and this is the reason that they have survived.

fertility and the Moon. According to France Bezlaj’s etymological explanation, the name derives from semantic roots meaning one who creates or devises. If we link this explanation to the story of the Man in the Moon, a tale that is known practically throughout the world, and remember that in Slovenian tales the Moon is frequently personified as Kurent, it appears that people viewed him as a kind of primogenitor, a being who contributed to the spread of the human race, to their regeneration and to the fertility of their fields. Even the Carnival custom in the area around Ptuj, where kurenti plough a furrow to ensure a good harvest and jump from village to village, is intended to promote fertility. Recent archaeological discoveries have revealed a connection between kurenti and the ancient cult of Cybele – in which Cybele’s companions were called kuretēs and korybantēs. In view of this, we may safely say that Kurent was in all probability a divinity or demon connected to fertility and responsible for the Earth’s renewal.



Fighting the dragon in time and space

Combat with a dragon is a basic myth that in fact illustrates the central action of cosmological and fertility myths. This is why many mythological heroes – and, later, fairytale heroes – face a dragon at some stage in their life. Perun, also known as the Thunderer and identified with Elijah, was the Slavonic god of thunder and lightning, the supreme deity. Veles was the Slavonic god of the underworld, the god of cattle and war, able to adopt the form of a dragon or serpent. Since he represented chthonic forces, temples of Veles were built in valleys, while temples of Perun, a celestial god, were built on hills. Because Veles threatened fertility and existence, there was conflict between Veles and Perun.

Kresnik is connected with fire, the striking of sparks and the sun, and in Slovenian folk tales and songs is the winner of a battle with a dragon. The young prince rescues his sister Vesna and the rescue is followed by a holy marriage or hieros gamos. This event is recalled by the custom of Midsummer or Whitsun weddings in the Western European tradition. But just as the sun sets for a time, so does Kresnik disappear, although he always returns again to this world.

The Green Man (also Green George), sometimes called Jarilo or Vesnik, defeats his enemy Rabolj in a duel and saves Marjeta. This tradition survives in folk songs and customs.

While Perun remains the unchallenged supreme deity, the Green Man and Kresnik are susceptible to death, constantly travelling from this world to the other but always returning.

Almost all of the world's religions, even the oldest, are based on the idea of a Great Mother or Giver of Life who was good but could also be terrible, for example the Phrygian Cybele or the Balto-Polabian Živa.

The Mother Goddess

Almost all of the world's religions, even the oldest, are based on the idea of a Great Mother or Giver of Life who was good but could also be terrible, for example the Phrygian Cybele or the Balto-Polabian Živa. Among the Slavs the worship of Mokosh was widespread. Mokosh was the only goddess in Prince Vladimir's Kiev pantheon. The route of the name mok- means 'wet', 'damp', while the rot mot- means 'to coil', 'to spin'. Water and spinning held a central position in the cult of this female divinity, whom the Russians also called Mat' syra, signifying Moist Mother Earth. This deity also had a terrible side that brought her closer to the Hecate of Antiquity, the Greek Artemis or Roman Diana, the Russian Baba-Yaga, the Germanic Frau Bercht (or Percht) or our own Pehtra Baba.

The Great Mother was however a radiant goddess who taught people to bake bread, to spin and weave, and to heal. She was also skilled at sorcery.

In the Slovenian folk tradition, these

characteristics and skills were conserved by mythological female figures called sredožimke. These include Zlata Baba (the 'Golden Woman'), also known simply as Baba, and Pehtra Baba – still very much alive in folk tradition. The wild hunt or chase connected to the latter figure was also supposed to bring fertility and renewal to nature

With the advent of Christianity, Pehtra was replaced by St Lucy, the bringer of light, and St Gertrude (Jedrt), the patroness of spinning, whose attributes are the mouse and the spindle.

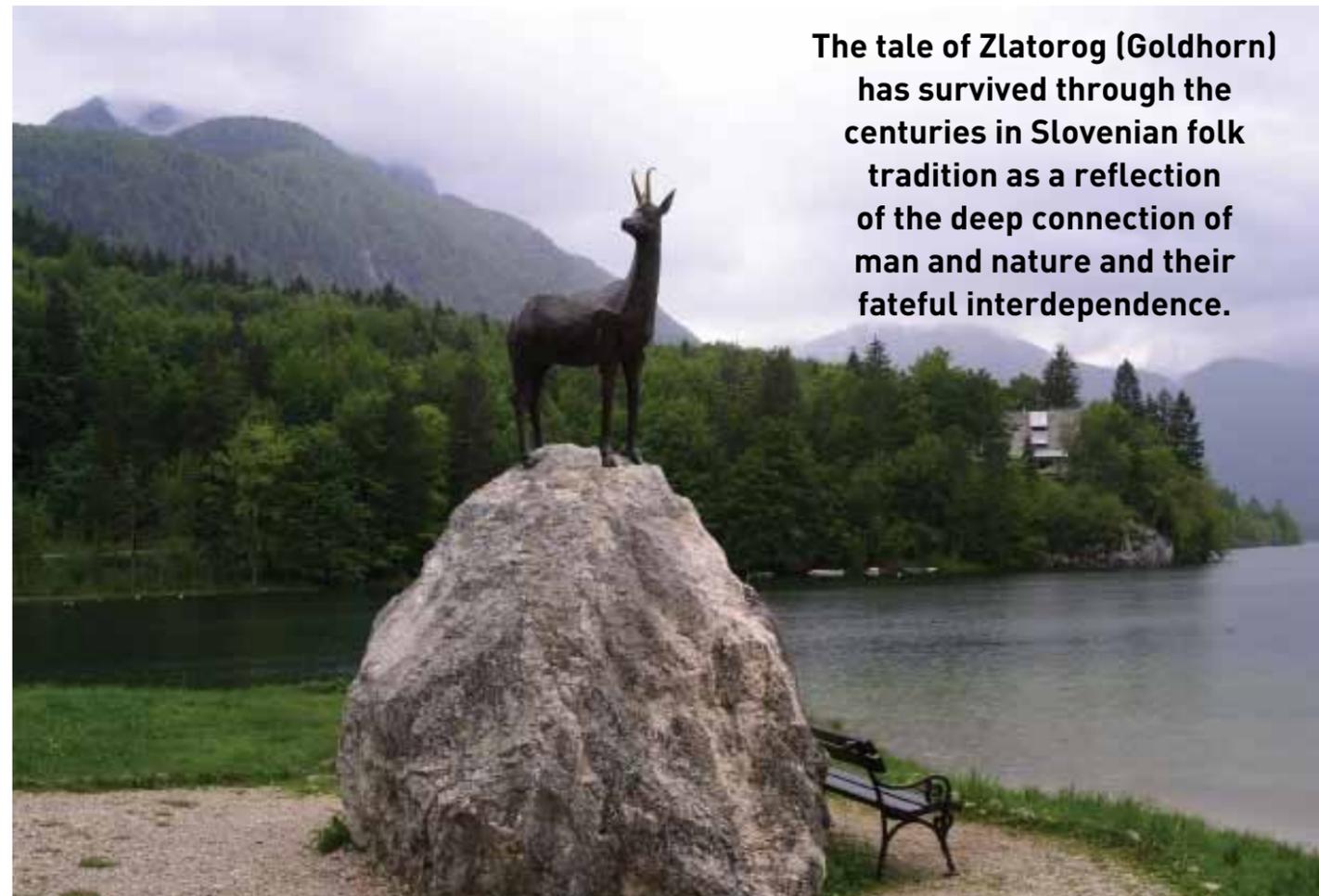
The Sacred Tree and the World Mountain

Veneration of the Sacred Tree was very widespread in Slovenia. The motif of the dead tree which miraculously grows green again at the resurrection of the saviour also appears in numerous folk tales about King Matthias.

King Matthias embodies several motifs from ancient Oriental, Indo-European and medieval tradition. Also concealed in these stories are the Christian concepts of the Apocalypse, the end of the world, Christ, the Antichrist and the saviour or Messiah. Other motifs came from fairytales, ballads, chivalric romances, and so on.

King Matthias sleeps under the Cosmic Mountain or World Mountain. On him rests the whole world, much as it rests on Adam, buried beneath Golgotha. Just as a dead tree – the Cross – turns green on Golgotha, so does the Tree of Life grow in front of Matthias's mountain: a dry linden that turns green when Matthias awakens. The hero will raise his army

The tale of Zlatorog (Goldhorn) has survived through the centuries in Slovenian folk tradition as a reflection of the deep connection of man and nature and their fateful interdependence.



and once he has destroyed the evil in the world a golden age will return.

In the 19th century King Matthias was also adopted in literature as a mythical symbol for a national or social idea.

Mythical creatures

Among the mythical creatures populating the Slovenian folk tradition are quite a number that embody natural or supernatural forces and regulate balance in the universe. The tale of Zlatorog (Goldhorn) has survived through the centuries in Slovenian folk tradition as a reflection of the deep connection of man and nature and their fateful interdependence. In the popular imagination Zlatorog is a white chamois with golden horns, the leader of a herd of mountain goats who graze on mountain ridges in the midst of wonderful gardens, watched over by female spirits known as white women. A hunter from Trenta, a protégé of the white women, attempts to kill this sacred animal in order to steal his wonderful horns and take possession of his earthly treasures. He pays for his

boldness by being flung over a precipice. Overnight, the mountain gardens are transformed into a rocky waste, the white women, Zlatorog and the chamois leave the unhappy place and go who knows where. Similar stories are known in the mountains of Albania, in Greece, among the southern Slavs and in the wider area of the eastern Alps. All of them are representative of an ancient myth.

Stars

Even in the ancient past, the stars enabled people to locate themselves in space, time and nature, and numerous myths and legends grew up around them.

The Milky Way (Via Lactea), which has many other names including the Road to Santiago and Godfather's Straw, is one of the large star systems known as galaxies. In autumn, when the stars in the summer sky move towards the west, this belt of stars is reminiscent of the flight of migratory birds. In the valley of Poljanska Dolina the Milky Way was known as the Eternal Way – the souls of the dead were believed to travel along it to the other world.

The five brightest stars of the Cygnus constellation form a pattern in which the image of a cross is easily discerned. Usually called the Northern Cross, this has also been known as St John's Cross, Helen's Cross and the Cross of Our Lady. In folk tradition the Cygnus constellation had a very important role for travellers, who often looked to the stars when on a journey. Not only in order to find their way across trackless wastes, but also to know when it was safe to set out on a journey.

The Great Bear (Ursa Major) or the Plough is clearly visible in the summer sky. Its shape is often compared to that of a wagon (or 'wain') or a long-handled ladle (or 'dipper'). In Poljanska Dolina and Bohinj this constellation is known as Elijah's Chariot. Hence the riddle: 'What saint has not yet died?' – 'Elijah, because he is still driving his chariot across the sky.' The name Martin's Wain comes from the story of how St Martin (in other versions St James or St Corbinian) harnessed a bear to his wagon after the latter had killed his horse. >>>



Mythical creatures of nature

Slovenian narrative tradition has preserved, almost to the present day, certain animistic beliefs – the oldest religious beliefs of all – whereby people believe that plants and other entities have spirits or souls. Thus, for example, they saw a tree as a godmother that was able to help people and would, with its branch, touch a newborn child in front of its mother.

Creatures or spirits and demons of nature such as giants and, fairies, white women, witches, mermaids, tritons, wild men and wild women were believed to live in the natural environment in which human beings also had to live and with which they had to coexist if they wished to survive. For this reason, it was in nature that people identified the greatest number of mysterious creatures.

Among the commonest mythical beings in nature are fairies – ethereal creatures with long, shining hair. People imagined and also believed that they lived in trees, in the cracks and hollows of rocky cliffs, on the tops of mountains, near springs and streams, and in reeds. According to some tales, they even taught people to dance, sing and heal.

Fairy stories sometimes interweave with stories about the Fates.

Many mountain peaks are named after giants. Legends told of how these giants built castles, breaking rocks and uprooting trees, and passing tools to each other from one peak to the next. Giants were supposed to be the original inhabitants of the land. According to one tradition, they originally lived only on 'Gold Mountain', before dispersing to other peaks.

Mythical creatures of earthly treasures

Until recently people still believed in gnomes, goblins and pixies – and that they appeared everywhere: in forests, on mountains, in mines, in marshes, by firesides and in the workshops of blacksmiths and cobblers. There was practically no one who had not met a gnome or a goblin at least once in his life, while some people – according to legend – even tamed them, training them to work for them and bring them money.

Gnomes, goblins and pixies are little creatures sometimes no bigger than a thumb or a blade of grass, sometimes the size of a dwarf, with wizened faces, long white beards and pointed red caps, for

which reason they are known as kapiči in the Primorska region. They are usually dressed in a blue jacket and red or green trousers, so that even the colour of their clothes emphasises their vital energy. They often carry a blue or green light or, especially if they are flying through the air, trail a blue glow behind them. Goblins could also take on other appearances and appear as black cats, frogs, calves or firelight. In their role as guardians of the Earth's treasures, goblins are related to the tradition of serpents or dragons.

Another widespread tradition is that of house spirits, good spirits of the domestic hearth, also known as house elves. These traditions derive from the veneration of ancestors and household gods.

Spirits and demons

Among the many kinds of spirits and ghosts, a prominent place is occupied by the souls of those who are unable to find peace – because of their sins, the circumstances of their birth or death, or as the result of a curse. These include the souls of children who have died before being baptised, which usually appear as lights or black birds with curved beaks and flit through the air at dusk with a mournful cry. If someone redeems them by baptising them or praying for them, they appear to him as a white dove or an angel, give thanks, and fly off to heaven.

Souls that return to this world because of their sins are known by a variety of names, including headless ones, candle-bearers and lost souls. They roam about restlessly at night and await deliverance. They appear, with a light, in the form of tall, headless people and measure fields, return stolen land and move boundary stones. When candle-bearers collide with each other, candles sparkle. A lost soul is the spirit of a dead person who has done an injustice to someone else and returns home to weep so that others will pray for him. They mainly appear during Advent and before All Saints.

Vampires are frequently equated in the Slovenian tradition with werewolves and jack-o'-lanterns; when they die, a nail must be placed under their tongue.

Today new myths are appearing, while the old ones live a new life in art, politics and other forms of social communication. ●



POKLJUKA

SLEEPING BEAUTY IS WIDE AWAKE

Simon Demšar Photo Archive

THE POKLJUKA PLATEAU HAS BEEN a popular tourist destination since before the Second World War. This fact, combined with its economic significance, means that it represents a complex unit. In contrast to many similar areas, and thanks to intelligent management, it appears that the interested parties have been able to find a winning formula and life in harmony, where tourism, agriculture and forestry are able to coexist.

The attractiveness of Pokljuka has never been disputed. With or without tourist facilities, it has been loved by people from near and far. The truth is, however, that many people did not actually miss the tourism aspect. With daily life and tourism having intermingled for decades, a number of privately owned huts have been converted – legally or otherwise – into accommodation establishments. So if you asked around, it was never impossible to find a place

to stay in Pokljuka. It has been equally popular as a destination for daily trips. Mushrooming and blueberry-picking are legendary in Pokljuka.

By today's environmental standards, it would be close to impossible to make Pokljuka what it is. But as tourists, on the other hand, we should be grateful to our ancestors who laid the foundations for today's infrastructure. Set in the middle of the Triglav National Park, not far from the foot of Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain, it is difficult to get any closer to nature. And despite its popularity it is far from being overcrowded: you can always find space just for yourself.

Pokljuka is a well-known starting-point for an ascent of Triglav but there is so much more to it than that. While Triglav takes some experience, Viševnik (2,050 metres), for example, is much closer and more easily accessible, while offering a similar experience. Other popular peaks include Mali Draški

Vrh, which is accessible along a ridge, Debeli Peč with a mountain hut offering accommodation and good food, and Lipanski Vrh. On the way to Pokljuka, just outside the village of Gorje, there is a spectacular gorge, perhaps the quietest and most peaceful place in the entire area. Again, there is every chance that you will not meet a single soul there.

Being an important agricultural area, Pokljuka is full of mountain pastures which, while still serving their original purpose, are also a tourist attraction. Zajamniki is one of the better known ones, with arguably Pokljuka's best vistas, including Lake Bohinj. It is also unique for the historic architecture of its wooden cottages. Uskovnica, with its public mountain hut, is easily accessible. The same goes for Lipanca, where the mountain hut prides itself on fully organic food and they even make their own herbal tea. On the way from Rudno Polje to Uskovnica, the spiritually



has been done. 'All these years we watched with sadness what was happening. Not a single nail had been hammered since the last renovation, and all we could see was a downward trend. Pokljuka has been a Sleeping Beauty for too long. I admit that even we locals were not aware of its potential,' says Korošec. At the same time, he does not forget to warn against pollution, which, with the expected increase in the number of visitors, is becoming a serious threat.

The three-star Hotel Šport, formerly the object of criticism, now offers basic accommodation, with 104 beds. The management is counting on tradition, an excellent location and access from Bled as well as Bohinj. They mostly expect young families who can take advantage of the nearby ski slopes in winter. In the long term, they would like to build an extension with a wellness centre, but at the same time it is the hotel's natural setting that is the focus of attention. 'The hotel may have three stars but the surrounding nature has seven', says manager Tomaž Barbek.

Those who do not agree can opt for accommodation just a stone's throw away at Tadej Valjavec's Vila Triglav, offering a boutique and luxurious touch to Pokljuka. No picture can capture the warmth and attention to detail at this completely refurbished villa, designed by Slovenia's most celebrated architect, Jože Plečnik. Inside, it features four individually designed rooms, a sauna, a jacuzzi – and a view of Triglav. The only danger is that you will not want to leave it and go outdoors. 'Because I am a cyclist, people often think that the villa is intended for athletes only, but that's not true,' says Valjavec. One option, however, is the 'altitude simulation', which recreates the

oriented will probably stop at 'energy points' reputed to have healing powers.

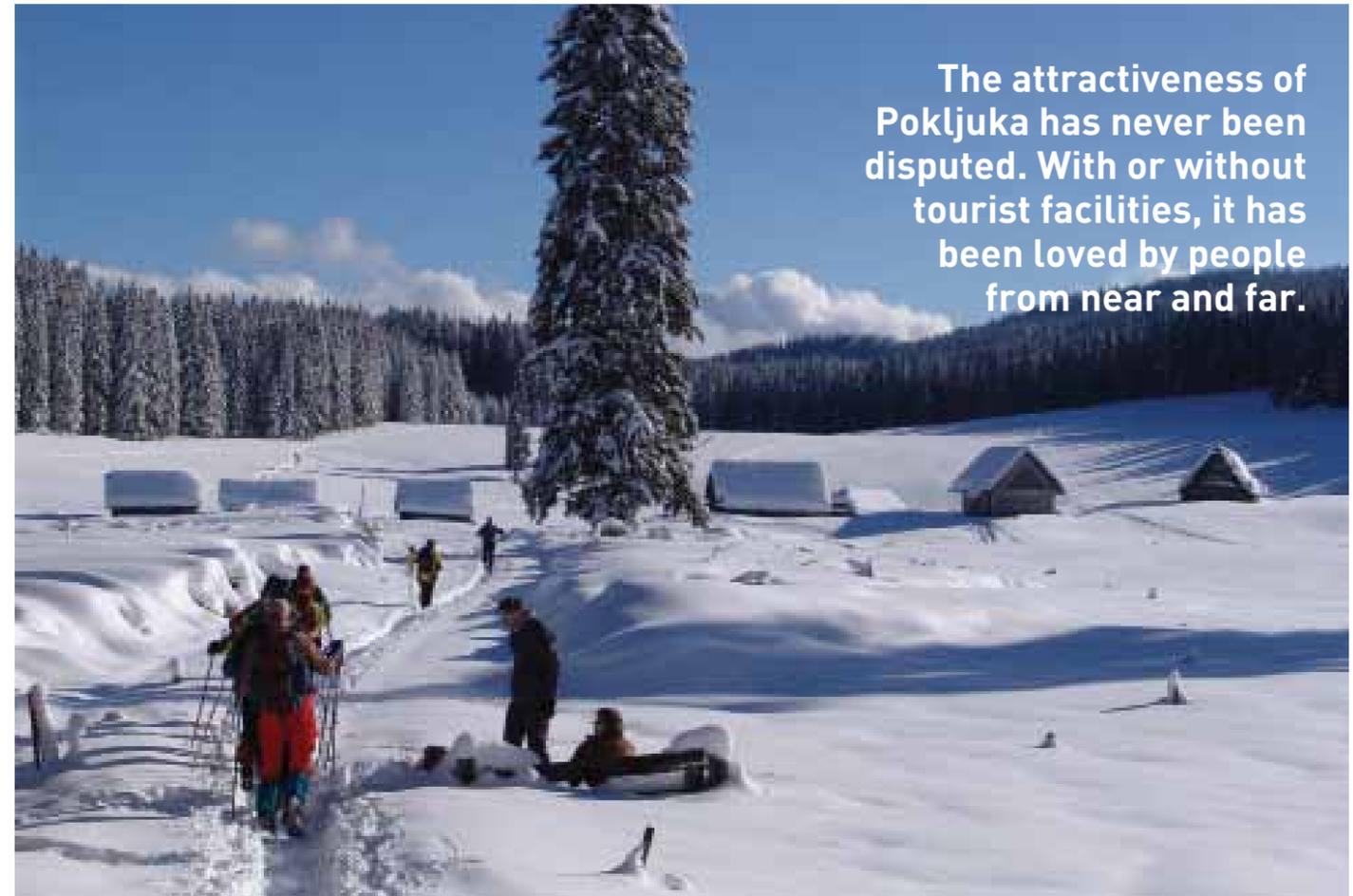
Partnership with locals

To judge from reports in the media, less than four years ago Pokljuka's tourist facilities were literally in ruins. The Hotel Šport was falling apart, tenants and owners were taking each other to court, and the managing body (the Triglav National Park Fund) was being accused of negligence. From today's perspective, however, it is clear that they were only gearing up for something big. Today this can be seen in the €1.6 million refurbishment of the Hotel Šport. For

promotional reasons, the Šport has joined forces with the brand new Hotel Center at Rudno Polje and the newly renovated Vila Triglav, owned by Slovenia's most successful professional cyclist, Tadej Valjavec. Together they make an ideal combination, suiting every taste as far as comfort (and pricing) is concerned. The renovated four-star Penzion Jelka is scheduled to reopen later this year.

Another positive (and rather rare) thing is that the makeover went hand in hand with local people. Janez Korošec, who was in charge of the first renovation of the Hotel Šport in the early 1970s, expressed his and locals' delight at what

The attractiveness of Pokljuka has never been disputed. With or without tourist facilities, it has been loved by people from near and far.



conditions found at high altitudes. 'It is useful for athletes but at the same time it enables a quicker recovery from all kinds of injuries and even helps people lose weight.'

The Hotel Center in Rudno Polje, at the end of the main road to Pokljuka, is the heart of the sports centre, formerly known as the biathlon centre. Biathlon and cross-country skiing are still the core activities but the management wants to expand the boundaries by including events such as gastronomic weeks. Its biggest advantage is a location right in the middle of cross-country skiing trails, so you can literally step from your room onto the snow. There are around five kilometres of trails around the hotel and another 40 in the nearby forests. Even if you are not a guest of the hotel, it is worth coming for to the hotel bar for a drink or to lounge on the outside terrace and watch the biathletes training for the next World Cup event.

Activities

Compared to many other places advertising hiking, cycling, trekking, walking and similar activities, Pokljuka

has taken a step forward, with events organised throughout the year. For small groups and individuals, they will provide a coach or guide and supply the equipment. If you want to go cycling, for example, you can hire a top-quality bike at Valjavec's place and take him along as a guide, even if you are not staying at Vila Triglav. Whatever you decide to do will be organised by the most qualified of the three partners. The list of activities includes cross-country skiing,

rifle and bow shooting, snowshoeing (night and day), hiking, Nordic walking, tobogganing (night and day) and mountain biking. Tadej Valjavec can even take you mountain biking on frozen cross-country skiing tracks. Pokljuka is blessed with plentiful snow but when it does eventually go away there are plenty of other events to enjoy, such as the Family Day in July, the Adrenaline Weekend in August and the Mushrooms and Forest Fruits Festival in Autumn. ●

About Pokljuka

Located some 15 kilometres from Bled and Bohinj, Pokljuka is one of three plateaus in north-west Slovenia (the others are Mežakla and Jelovica), and the only one with significant tourist facilities. These date back to at least early 1930s, when today's Hotel Šport was built. It also used to be a popular retreat for the socialist political elite, often based at today's Vila Triglav.

The Pokljuka plateau is about 20 kilometres long, with an elevation of between 1,100 and 1,400 metres. Today it is 97% covered by coniferous forests but, interestingly, these are not the original vegetation. This honour goes to the beech forests that were for the most part cleared in the 18th century to serve the needs of local iron foundries. Pokljuka is also a natural phenomenon, thanks to the wetland areas close to the Hotel Šport, unusual at such high elevations. Pokljuka is also economically significant with its 6,300 hectares of spruce forests and pastures, where several hundred head of cattle graze each summer.

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



Suha krajina
Photo Darinka Mladenovič