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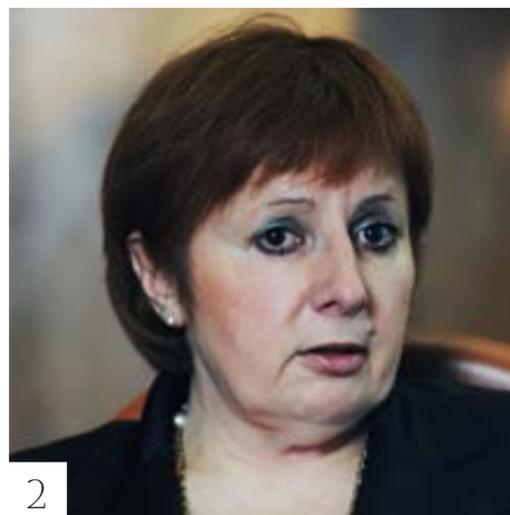
Searching for solutions not problems

- INTERVIEW: **Tatjana Fink** • PEOPLE: **Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak**
- SPORTS: **His majesty the Vitranc cup** • ART & CULTURE: **Austellung Laibach Kunst**
- SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **Žganci – always and forever**

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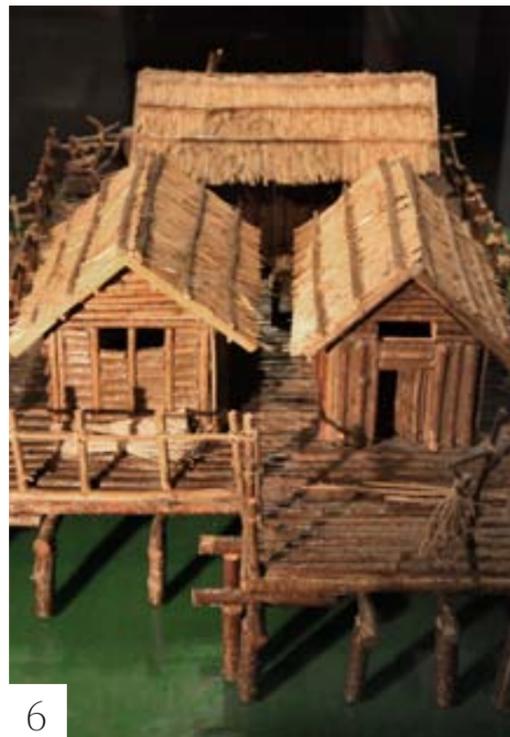
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The reign of the "Kurent"

Sinfo – Slovenian information

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editorial



Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

ARE WE PATRONS OF THE LIGHT OR THE DARK?

Every individual is faced with an internal and ongoing battle between the light and the dark. Between mischief, anger, malevolence, jealousy, sadness, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, low self-esteem, lies, selfishness and the good inside us, the joy, peace, love, hope, tranquillity, mercy, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, uprightness, compassion, trust. Which will win? The light or the dark? The one that is kept within. It is for every individual to decide whether they want to be a patron of the light or the dark.

We need to see victory as our goal; we must walk towards it, focusing on solutions rather than problems. The reality can always be changed, and we are responsible for every moment of our lives, says Sinfo's guest interviewee, Tatjana Fink, the director of Trimo, one of the most distinguished directors in Slovenia, and the most influential and respected women in the Slovenian business world.

Andrej Pompe, the president and programme director of Brand Business School poses the question of how we came from the Linden Leaf to the "I FEEL SLOVENIA" brand in 20 years. Despite a 20-year span between the two brands, the two have never been as close together as they are today. For Andrej Pompe, combining the two is an excellent solution. If the IFS brand has been embraced abroad, why should it not find its way to the hearts of Slovenes?

At the time when the pharaohs were ordering huge pyramids to be built for their afterlife, and with this ruthlessly exploiting their people, pile-dwellers or lake-dwellers, known in Slovenian as koliščarji, mostiščarji or jezerci, lived in the biggest marshes in Slovenia, which are today called Ljubljansko barje. They are believed to have lived in the area for centuries, as early as 5000 BC until 1500 BC at the latest, when the lake became completely outgrown by the marshes, leading to the end of pile-dwelling construction.

Every year at the end of February, Slovenia is swept by a festival of joy where, against a backdrop of dancing snowflakes and Kurents, winter is chased away and spring is welcomed. "Pustovanje", the festivities held during the Shrovetide period, are the result of a long tradition in Slovenia, with a wealth of masks that have been preserved and have in time started to symbolise the region or town of their origin. The Kurent is the most popular traditional Shrovetide figure in the wider area of Ptuj, with up to 2,000 costumes seen every year. The legend has it that "the conqueror of women's handkerchiefs who chases the cold away" in fact fights the winter and helps nature to wake up and rise to the life of spring.

March was also a month of national sporting pride with two events – the Vitranc Cup and the Ski-Jumping Cup in Planica. The Vitranc Cup can safely be called one of the most popular Alpine skiing events of recent years. A 50-year tradition in any sporting competition is indeed a valuable tradition, and this competition undoubtedly fills Slovenians with great pride: all this makes the Vitranc Cup much more than just a top-level sporting event through which Slovenia shows itself to the world. It is a monument to Alpine skiing and a scene of grand battles and true drama where giants and legends were born on the white slopes.



Darijan Košir

Priorities and pitfalls

As previously mentioned, Prime Minister Borut Pahor's government has, at most, a year and a half left in office, which is why the public needs to be openly told what to expect from its leaders; on the other hand, the crisis in the country is not over yet, the impact of the economic recession is still being felt, and the government continues to work in rather unfavourable conditions.

At the same time, these conditions have forced the government to invest considerable effort and take several unpopular decisions over the last year. Thus, it has managed to preserve the country's sound economic core, but the high number of anti-crisis measures taken has also created an impression that the government has been unable to handle so many decisions. This has left the public confused and uncertain as to what the government has been doing and what it has been trying to achieve. Furthermore, in recent months the Slovenian economy and society, as such, have had to face the existence of a number of critical issues (e.g. construction companies and the entire environment affected by the construction industry), which called for immediate and focused government action.

The government became aware of the feeling of confusion and the urgency of taking action, not only by opinion poll results but also by other important political players. President Danilo Türk, for example, challenged the government to immediately adopt, after the New Year, a set of, say, five priority projects it would accomplish in 2011 (and later) and communicate them in the public accordingly. At first glance accomplishing the task looked next to impossible for many reasons, including the

fact that the coalition parties seemed highly uncoordinated in their perception of urgent or priority measures. Yet, the series of coalition meetings showed that the difference in perceptions was not all that divergent, and that the coalition partners were able to coordinate urgent measures, unify the relevant standpoints, and unite before the public to communicate a relatively uniform message to citizens, which a member of a coalition party optimistically commented on by saying: "We start work tomorrow."

As previously mentioned, the government has coordinated and built a tree structure of priority measures and agreed on the six most important sets of tasks which it referred to as 'priorities.' Also, it has determined within each of those priorities several commitments in the form of laws, rules and regulations, or other measures envisaged to secure their implementation.

Within these priorities fall several interesting legislative acts and measures that will make government goals more operational. Some of the measures are designed as short-term measures and in light of urgent demands (in particular from the economic sector) these will have to be adopted in the first phase, in February and March

The six main priorities presented to the public were the following:

1. Consolidation of public finances
2. Promotion of favourable business environments
3. Improvement in payment discipline
4. Improvement in labour market performance
5. More effective prosecution of economic crimes
6. Structural measures and institutional adjustments

2011. Short-term measures include the improvement in payment discipline and more effective prosecution of economic crime. However, several other measures, in particular those relating to the modernisation of the labour market, public administration, and the health care system, are significantly more long-term in nature and can be adopted after considerable negotiations with the social partners within a period of one year. Other attractive measures are: taxation on total bank assets; elimination of administrative barriers; adoption of a law concerning reductions in payment delays; an overhaul of labour legislation; amendments to the State Prosecutor Act, the Criminal Procedure Act, the Courts Act, and the Judicial Service Act; modernisation of Slovenia's health care system; adjustments in the public institution management; and many others – all are equally important, forming a coherent and systematic whole. As the operators and deadlines have already been defined for all the measures, not only the government as the announcer of the measures but also the general public and the politicians will be able to monitor the government's progress on the implementation continuously and carefully.

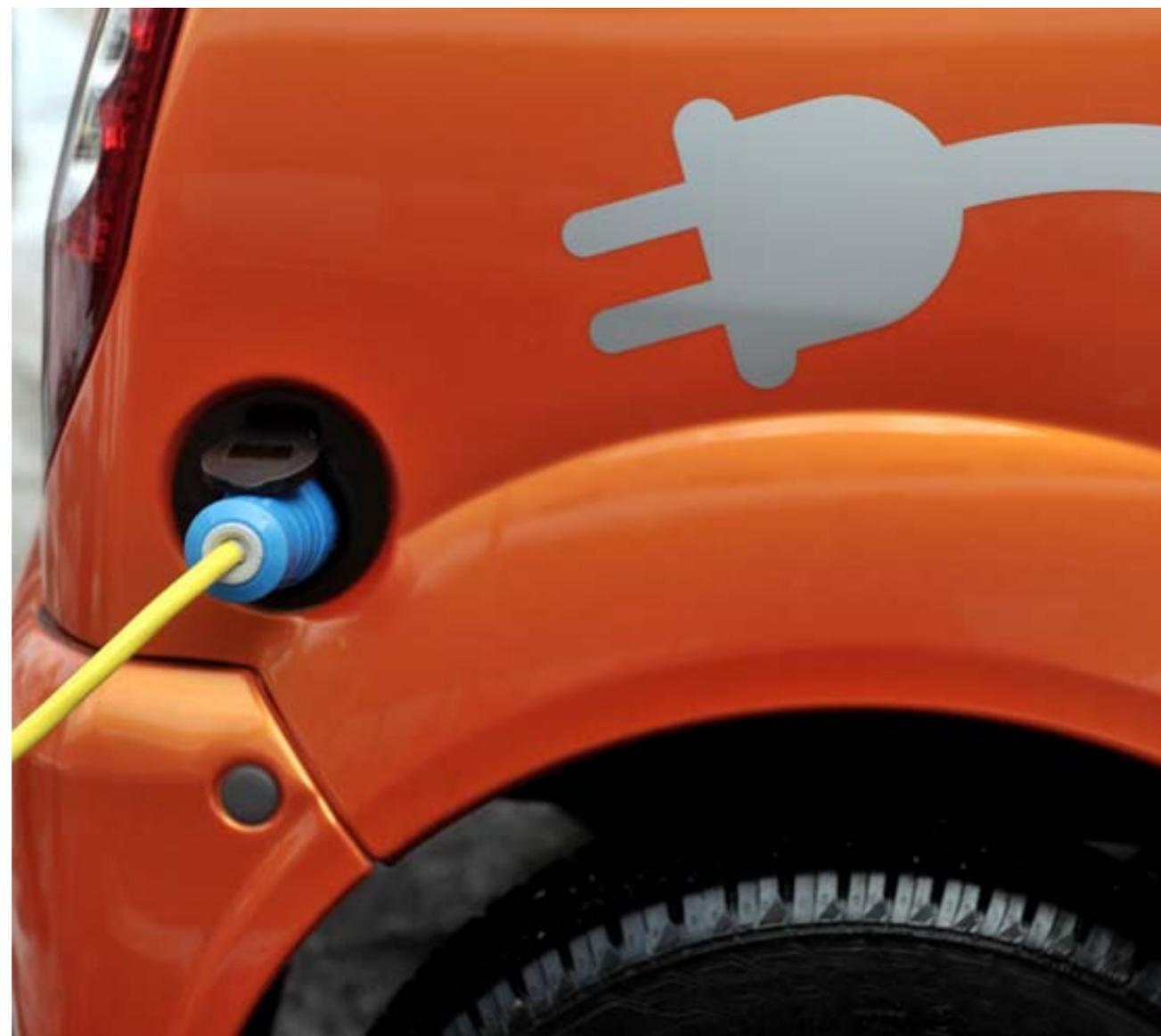
In short, these measures complete the anti-crisis actions taken by Prime Minister Pahor's government in this unfortunate term of office which was, as previously stated, marked by Slovenia's worst-ever economic crisis. The government accomplished its first difficult task, namely financial stabilization, by endorsing the state budgets for 2011 and 2012, which undertake to gradually cut the government deficit by implementing a set of cost-saving measures (in particular as no significant rise in tax inflows can be counted on as yet due to the aftermath of the crisis). As part of the second important task tackled in 2010 the government adopted the majority of measures in its anti-crisis package: 16 important long-term and structural laws have already been implemented,

with the majority of others awaiting government or parliamentary debate or adoption. These include long-term structural measures such as the pension reform, which may end up as a referendum (as will the Mini Jobs Bill). The mentioned 2011 priorities mark a logical continuation and completion of the measures taken over the last two years, a package that will help Slovenia stabilize its economic position, and make the necessary arrangements for the developmental breakthrough to take place in 2012 and the years to follow.

Clearly, the success of government reforms is at risk by the possibility, and outcome, of the referenda. Both key labour-law acts, namely the Pension Reform Act and the Mini Jobs (Student Work) Act, are currently facing a referendum vote. With regard to the pension reform bill, the Government called on the Constitutional Court to establish whether a referendum on pensions was allowed, and whether a rejection of this bill would have massive unconstitutional consequences. Slovenia's high court, however, decided that the pension reform bill shall be voted on by the public (the Mini Jobs Act referendum is scheduled for 10 April). This situation points to a typical feature of Slovenia's referendum rules as being rather lenient in defining the criteria for public vote. As is, referendum rules may put at risk the government's entire reform package as two other crucial and unavoidable though unpopular measures – labour market reform and health care reform – may also be decided in referendums. Such a development would endanger the entire project aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Slovenia's economy as the main aim of all government reforms, which is the only route to the long-term survival and breakthrough of Slovenia in the increasingly competitive world.

ACER's opening marks the beginning of a new era of cross-border cooperation between energy regulators – ACER will provide a more user-friendly energy market

On 3 March 2011, the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) opened in Ljubljana. Its main task will be to promote cooperation between national regulators at EU level and complement the functions they perform. The Prime Minister said that he was proud that the members of the EU had entrusted Slovenia with the responsibility of hosting the seat of the Agency.



Günther Oettinger,
European
Commissioner
for Energy:

This is a truly European moment; the Agency's main focus will be on cooperation between the national energy regulators, with the involvement of the European Commission. It will propose legislative initiatives, participate in establishing ACER guidelines, and encourage regulators and the industry to participate in setting priorities. At the same time, the Commission will discuss these priorities with the Director of ACER and the Agency's Regulatory Board. ACER's opening represents the beginning of a new era of cross-border cooperation between energy regulators, as the current levels of cooperation between energy regulators will only get stronger, creating a more effective framework within which to operate.

Commissioner Günther Oettinger thanked the national regulators for their work undertaken in the interest of European citizens, and announced that the EU's third energy package will serve to further strengthen their position and increase expectations about its work. Minister of the Economy Darja Radič underlined the importance of cooperation in the field of energy between EU Member States and other countries, such as the coop-



Alberto
Pototschnig,
Director of ACER:

This EU Agency opens the door to the third energy package. It will provide the tools and institutional framework necessary for the implementation of an integrated internal electricity market model – which has already been defined – and a model for an integrated internal gas market, which the EU is still developing. In this way, a single European energy market will be created and, with this, common rules for the network code. Time will tell how the Agency will perform, I'm sure the results we can expect will be good. ACER's task list is long and will be extended, but the Agency enjoys a large support. ACER's obligations correspond to the current situation, as the EU's internal market for energy is still forming. The third energy package, which forms the basis for the operation of the Agency, represents an important step forward.

eration between Slovenia and Russia in the South Stream gas pipeline project. She stressed the need that third countries that are integrated in the EU single market respect relevant European legislation. The battle fought for the seat of the ACER was long and tense. Ljubljana faced competition from Bratislava and Bucharest. By the end, only Ljubljana and the Slovak capital were left in the running and the outcome of the decisive ballot held in December 2009 was 15:11.



Minister of the Economy, Darja Radić:

This is an agency that will regulate the internal energy market and play a very important role in its design. I do not know whether there is enough awareness of the importance of the Agency in Slovenia. Ljubljana is now on the EU's energy map, and will host representatives from all EU Member States and companies, as well as countries outside the borders of the 27 EU countries who are interested in investing in the European market. The opening of the new Agency also has a symbolic significance, since Slovenia still has a number of tasks to achieve in the energy sector in order to get closer to meeting the requirements of the EU internal market. I therefore see the Agency as an incentive for Slovenia to make an effort as a host, make up for all the delays, and prepare an energy sector that will know how to be competitive in the common European market. The third energy package is one of the most ambitious in recent times; it fulfils the requirements of EU regulations on energy and enables the energy market to become more user-friendly and better for the economy.

All EU Members voted, with the exception of the presiding country. The United Kingdom, one of the three most influential countries in the Union, supported Slovenia. The main task of the ACER will be to encourage national regu-



Prime Minister Borut Pahor:

EU's third energy package is the first truly integrated EU energy framework, and Slovenia is very supportive of this. During its European Union Presidency in 2008, Slovenia also contributed a great deal towards its adoption, and I am proud that EU has recognised those efforts and established ACER in Slovenia. A competitive and efficient energy market is a precondition for lower prices for citizens, for the transition to a low carbon society, and for achieving our objectives in the fight against climate change. ACER will contribute greatly to achieving these goals.

lators to work together and to complement the tasks carried out by the national regulators at the European level. However, the ACER is by no means a European regulator. It can only work in a cross-border context and has no direct powers with regard to national affairs. The Agency will carry out around 30 different tasks. Its main task will be preparation of framework guidelines and European network codes that will be binding for all 27 Member States. The process of developing network codes is complex and subject to comitology. ACER will draft around 20 framework guidelines and this will be the main task of the Agency over the next few years. The Agency is still in the process of recruiting staff and plans to employ 52 people. This pro-



cess should be completed by the end of the year. The Agency has three departments: electricity, gas, and administration, and some services responding directly to the Director. The Agency has three bodies: Board of Regulators, Administrative Board and Board of Appeal, which will primarily meet in Ljubljana.

ACER is financed from the EU budget. This year's Agency's budget is estimated to EUR 5 million, last year it was EUR 2 million.

Upon implementation of the new EU energy legislation Commissioner Oettinger once again called upon all EU Member States to quickly adapt their national legislations to the new European rules. He added that the Commission will carefully monitor the implementation of the third energy package and, if

necessary, initiate proceedings for any breaches of European legislation.

Recently, the European Commission informed that all Member States are falling behind in introducing the new European energy legislation. Slovenia plans to bring its legislation in line by this summer.

EIC CODES

EIC code (Energy Identification Code) represents a unique code for the identification of a European energy market participant which enables a more efficient electronic data exchange.

http://www.energyandutilities.org.uk/thought-leadership/content/1139/progress_towards_eu_energy_network_codes
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/246&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en&guiLanguage=en>

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, photo: archive

Common Agricultural Policy by the year 2020

One of the priorities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food for the next two years are negotiations to reform the Common Agricultural Policy by the year 2020. In November 2010, the European Commission published a document setting out strategic objectives for agriculture for the next 7-year period. The Ministry supported the proposed changes and guidelines, the details of which will become known in the second half of 2011, when the Commission plans to prepare legislative proposals.



In June 2011 the Commission will present a draft reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, and in July 2011, the draft of a new fisheries fund. Commission's proposals will then be discussed by the EU Council. The reform proposals should be adopted by the end of 2012. Slovenia will focus particularly on the favourable treatment of small-scale fishing, as well as a better acknowledgement of the

regional characteristics of fisheries, fish farming and fisheries fund.

SLOVENIA'S POSITION ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

In the Communication on the reform of the CAP, issued by the Commission, vital food production and the conservation potential for its production across the EU are highlighted

as being the strategic objectives. For Slovenia, the security of long-term food supply is crucial. Two other important goals stated in the Communication are also important for Slovenia: sustainable management of natural resources and balanced spatial development.

Slovenia supports the maintenance of a strong common agricultural policy in the cur-

rent two-pillar structure and common rules. Without appropriate budgetary resources, the realisation of those goals will not be possible. Slovenia is therefore keen on maintaining the necessary level of resources for the CAP in the EU budget, and, through this, maintaining the current weighting of Member States, thereby preserving the existing levels of funding for Slovenia both for direct



MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD DEJAN ŽIDAN:

“The common agricultural policy is currently not focused on money but on the strategy and operational measures which present the basis for the distribution formulae. The common agricultural policy is about the greening of agricultural policy and the fair distribution of food. Let’s adopt greener farming innovations and implement them fully, as only then will they have the maximum effect. We are committed to making the overall agricultural policy greener, which in practice means that cross-compliance criteria need to be more stringent in terms of natural resources. The modernisation of income payments is required. In Slovenia, we advocate regional payments, which means that they should be different at the level of countries and regions. All costs, natural resources and other aspects need to be taken into consideration.

and ensure its funding. Decisions regarding the size of the funding, the involvement of various sectors in the promotion and content of the promotion, as well as the implementation itself are conducted through governmental procedures, within specific sectors, (e.g. milk, meat, bread grain, fruits, vegetables, wine grapes, olives, honey). Promotion will be implemented by way of a common general (generic) promotion and a promotion of quality schemes and voluntary designations. Promotion will be financed through mandatory contributions, paid by agricultural holdings and food processing industries in equal shares on primary agricultural

products, and posted to the specific budget item. Promotion will also be financed from the state budget, in the amount of 40% of the collected funds contribution.

Changes to the Agricultural Land Act concern primarily planning and protecting agricultural land and the area of agrarian operations. The objective of the Act is to maintain and improve the production potential of agricultural land for food production and its extension, the sustainable use of fertile land, landscape management, conservation and rural development. To achieve the goals set, the amendment to the Act provides for measures



support (Pillar I CAP) as well as rural development (Pillar II CAP).

Regarding the proposed changes in direct payments, Slovenia advocates the introduction of a single, fairer, greener and targeted system of direct payments (Pillar I CAP). In doing so, Slovenia is aware that its introduction might lead to a new distribution of resources between countries. The most important factors are gradual change and flexibility of implementation at the level of each Member State. Slovenia supports the further integration of environmental issues into the CAP in principle, and still has reservations concerning the Commission’s proposal regarding the introduction of mandatory environmental measures, due to the incompleteness of the proposals. With regard to the measures needed for the management of agricultural markets, Slovenia

is committed to its reform and simplification and the introduction of new mechanisms to improve the functioning of the agro-food chain, especially with regard to improving the situation of primary producers. In the context of rural development (Pillar II CAP) Slovenia supports the maintenance of the existing structure measures and new emphases, such as an increased concern for the environment, adapting to climate change and innovation.

ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS ACT, AND OF THE AGRICULTURAL LAND ACT

The Promotion of Agricultural and Food Products covers the promotion of agricultural and food products in accordance with EU regulations and follows the example of some other European countries. It provides the basic structure to promote



context: halting deforestation, creating buffer zones and the mobilisation of financial resources for sustainable forest management, and increasing public interest in the forest. During the International Year of Forests 2011, targeted activities for the purpose of raising awareness of the importance of sustainable forest management will take place at all levels in Slovenia. For campaign purposes, a website (www.letogozdov.si) has been set up for informing people about events taking place in the Year of Forests. The objectives of the national forest campaign are: to increase awareness of “forest” related issues. These include raising awareness of the importance of forests, of sustainable forest management and of wood as raw material. The aim is to motivate and connect governmental, business and other organisations in their work regarding forests and to reduce the gap between actual and possible output of forest potential.

PROJECT TO INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INDIRECT BUDGET USERS

In 2011, one of the priorities is to increase the efficiency of public services, which fall under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and are provided by: the Slovenian Forest Service, the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, the National Veterinary Institute, the Department of Fisheries RS, the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, the Slovenian Institute of Hop Research and Brewing, the Lipica Institute, the Slovenia Beekeepers Association and many other organisations. In 2011, particular emphasis will be put on the development of new guidelines in animal production and the analysis of the operation of public institutes and public services, and on the rationalization of public spending and recruitment. Operational plans in these services will focus on achieving set objectives, use and monitoring of relevant indicators and reporting.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS 2011

The United Nations General Assembly declared the year 2011 as the “International Year of Forests 2011”, with the tag line “Forests for People”. Several objectives were set in this

to eliminate overgrowing and to carry out agricultural operations. Amendments to the Act will make possible for more agricultural land to be used and for adequate protection of agricultural land from building and other forms of degradation. The sector responsible for agricultural land will also be able to play a more active role in the planning process.

EQUITABLE RELATIONS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

A fairer distribution of income in the food supply chain is an issue common to most Euro-

pean countries. In general, a solution to this problem can be either by a code or by special legislation.

Slovenia’s position is that individual links in the food supply chain should get adequate income from the activity conducted, and provide products of adequate quality at a reasonable price for consumers. In our opinion, a code is the appropriate option, if respected by all the links in the chain, from producers to processing industries and trade. To this end, the Ministry of Agricul-



Searching for solutions, not problems

Tatjana Fink

She is top of the list of the most respectable Slovenian managers and is one of the most influential and respected women in the business world. She claims that a lot of women's knowledge and talents have not yet been fully exploited and hopes that a balance between the number of men and women in management will eventually be established.

Mrs. Tatjana Fink, General Manager of Trimo. You are famous for creating with passion, both for people and with people. What is your motivation?

A powerful childlike curiosity and enthusiasm about our achievements. The results are the trends which establish us at the peak of European providers of original and complete solutions in steel buildings, roofs and facades, steel construction, containers and sound-insulation systems. An investigative soul is always interested in something, always searching for something, checking everything and exploring...

You have announced a health check of your own programmes, markets and processes, and in so doing, the timing of a new investment cycle.

Restructuring is expected to take effect on the demand side in 2011. At the same time, dumping prices will come to the fore. To compete with dumping is nigh on impossible. As a result of dumping, margin squeezes have been made which are obvious, but not unusual for the crisis. We want Slovenia to increase investment, much in the same way that some Western countries have done. The state should introduce investment subsidies in order to develop new business start-ups. We are mainly looking for opportunities in Western European markets, especially Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, and other countries with reliable payers. We will still continue to look for potential ways to reduce costs.

What was the last year for Trimo like? How did you operate and what are your plans for this year?

Taking the extremely difficult conditions into consideration, we are satisfied with our financial results, the development of our new products, and the restructuring process; we have made changes to operations and increased employee morale. Our plans? A 5% increase in sales and export income. We are looking to expand in markets in the Near East, where things have been put on hold for the time being, but we hope for the best.

What is your recipe for higher added value?

If it were so simple, everybody would have the recipe. There is no simple formula for higher added value. On one hand there is technology and, on the other hand, there is knowledge, which need to be combined using institutions and universities as the source, and redirected into new products, as well as into the economy. The school system, academic sphere and the entire social framework, which either supports or inhibits development, need to be involved.

If there is no new value, companies cannot divide anything. I advocate good added value and the search for innovative solutions, which also provide good salaries. If we spent more time on how to create more, then there would not be any questions regarding a minimum salary.

I firmly believe that Slovenians are capable of creating good added value, as we are flexible, open-minded and multitalent-

ed. It is a shame that we do not deal with things which would give us all more.

You operate in over 50 countries and have spread successfully into Third World markets. What are the perspectives that Slovenian companies need to adopt in order to succeed in the Arabian, Middle Asian and South American markets?

Great. Trimo hardly operates in Slovenia. Over 75% of its business is carried out in foreign markets. The success story of Trimo brought design, technology and the market together. The company, which sells its products around the world, pays a great deal of attention to innovation. Therefore, we have been opening invitations to tender for our employees to submit the craziest idea for a few years now. That is how we really collect crazy ideas. Besides, this year we have received an invitation to join the European Club of the Most Innovative Companies. The design process at Trimo is understood as being an integrated development process, in which architects and designers constantly cooperate with engineers and technologists from the outset. In order to keep up to speed, they monitor modern trends since some guidelines, such as minimalism, are applied in fashion as well as in architecture.

According to the opinion of marketing managers, more than half of the reputation of the company depends on the manager. Do you agree?

The manager's reputation is firstly built in the company and is dependent on the selec-

tion of trusted colleagues who have a motivation to live for the company and play a part in creating a strong corporate identity. It is believed that one third of the manager's business reputation depends on the business's results, which are of interest to the owners, and 40% of the manager's business reputation should depend on his/her public appearance. The rest should be innovations and so-called 'soft factors', which, among other things, also include social responsibility. The criteria taken into consideration when selecting the most influential business women were: total turnover, net profit, the number of employees in the company under their management, how many Supervisory Boards she has been a member of, how many associations and societies she is active in, if the company operates in foreign markets, and how much has been invested into research and development.

You have received a prestigious award for business excellence.

So far, our company has attained the best Slovenian results at the European Competition for Business Excellence. Among the 18 finalists of the European Award for Excellence, Trimo was in the company of organisations such as Siemens, OBI, TNT, Ricoh, Philips and VW, and achieved the best result among the finalists in the big company category. It is a special award, Prize Winner, in the field of leadership and constancy of purpose. The European Award for Excellence is the highest accolade available in the field of organisation excellence. The prize winners have been those organisations which have achieved the best results in all aspects of their operation. All the best organisations of all sizes in the private and public sectors can compete for this influential prize. This year, a total of 18 organisations have been awarded places as finalists in the contest.

The success of Trimo is the success of each employee and partner. We have been en-



I would encourage women to assume leadership and responsibility for their decisions.

couraging a different way of thinking and an innovative atmosphere. We create excellence in our business through an organised talent search and developing the abilities of all our employees. The improvement of business excellence has also been one of the strategic purposes of our company. The leadership prize, awarded by the EFQM organisation, gives us renewed energy to aim at that goal with our operations in future.

Success also depends on constantly adapting to new circumstances.

This is true. I think that all levels of society should adapt to the crisis. However, this is happening too slowly. There have been warning signs of our positioning on the competitiveness scale. We have a lot of talent and many of our people have been successful abroad, but when at home, the situation somehow suffocates them. Things should be changed from the top down. I am convinced that there are opportunities for us to become one of the most progressive nations in the world. So, public awareness first and then change for the better.

Are you well accepted by men in the 'traditionally masculine' business world?

We are all affected and enriched by each other. I have never had a feeling of not being accepted by men. Trimo has been introduced in different roles, but surely the most recognisable are the innovations, business excellence, new models, which are the reasons

for me to be recognisable as the Manager. Each man has something special, something of his own, his energy and talent. I get along with people well, personally and professionally.

However, you have been the generator of innovations at Trimo.

We are all generators – we all have special approaches and ideas. The leader should have the ability to create ideas and see them through to the end, resulting in financial success and relation to buyers. Each company has its own approach. Slovenians have an array of successful companies. We need to encourage successful companies, which compete on the global stage and test themselves everyday in business, in the same way that we encourage our sportsmen. We are not sufficiently aware of the fact that entrepreneurs have been the source of all our development and superstructure. It is significant that we are constantly adjusting to the situation with theoretic and practical knowledge, recognitions, models, permanent education, and participation in international forums. It is also very important to exchange approaches and practices.

How do you coordinate your private life with your business?

I always look for simplicity and that is the key to success. There is no time to laze around and there is always something that needs to be done. I am never bored. I am straightforward with people. I do not have negative feelings as they only drain

my energy. I keep going on. My big advantage lies in the fact that negative feelings never occupy me or drain me of my energy.

How would your subordinates describe you?

They would say that I am very strict and demanding, but they look forward to meeting me because I radiate power. People like looking for new solutions together. I always claim that one cannot be successful unless one is disciplined, neat and responsible. You have to keep to your word.

Are weekends yours or are you working?

The last one was all mine, but other weekends have been working weekends.

What would you advise a Slovenian woman?

I would say that she alone is responsible for her life. No one can stand up for herself better than her. She also has to be self-confident and never afraid. Certainly, women have a suitable place here, but we need more women in politics, which cannot be achieved overnight. It is a long-term process. A lot of women's knowledge and talents have not yet been exploited, but I believe that a balance between the number of men and women in management will eventually be established.

Unfortunately, perfection is very often required for a woman, which is not good. Many institutions are not adjusted to support women in their everyday life. Slovenia has many successful women who could

take over the highest positions in companies, but the number of women in top positions remains low and disproportionate to the number of women in the entire population.

What do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy many things, but I particularly like travelling, reading and exploring new things. I have always done things in my own way and had my own way of thinking. I appreciate honest and down to earth people – people who do not pretend to be something they are not, who are simply humane. It is important to me to live my life according to my own values. There is a big problem if people are not satisfied with themselves. People who internalise their values lead a balanced life, function well and are mostly satisfied. Slovenians have a tendency to complain all the time, even if it is not necessary at all. We feel like winners too rarely and like losers too often. We avoid being responsible adults. It is a pity, but all that wailing drains away our valuable energy. Winning is our goal. Let's take this direction. Let's find solutions, not problems. A given can always be changed. Every individual is important. People have to be joined and encouraged to change. We are the only ones responsible for the current situation. Therefore, I live and function for today because I can only live and change things now. I am convinced that we need to make radical changes to society. But each person should begin with himself.



The number of exporters should increase



increased export demand in the Western markets, particularly Germany. The Slovenian Government is in the process of concluding an Economic Partnership Agreement with Germany, similar to the agreement recently signed with France. Both countries are among Slovenia's most important economic partners, with Germany being at the top of the list.

The Slovenian Government hired German expert Hartmund Mehdorn as an adviser in the development of a logistics holding, which would include the railways, Luka Koper, and Intereuropa. Although such a scenario was already considered a few years ago, for now these plans seem impracticable. On the other hand, exchanges between Slovenia and France are thriving. Revoz in Novo mesto is one of the most successful subsidiaries of the French company Renault, and has great plans for the production of motor and electric vehicles. The French company, Alstom, which will cooperate in equipping the sixth unit of Šoštanj thermal-power plant, has shown an interest in participating in the construction of a possible new unit of the Krško nuclear power plant, and expressed a desire to use the Port of Koper for transport of cars manufactured in Romania, etc. Those partnership agreements are expected to provide a place for Slovenia on the French-German train, which should expedite Slovenia's development. Important reforms to the pension scheme, health insurance, and the labour market, amongst others, should also contribute to this end. The Slovenian Govern-

ment has set a special goal for this year – balancing and improving the competitiveness of the Slovenian economy to the greatest extent possible. Samo Hribar Milič, Director General of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, points out that the majority of Slovenia's exports have been achieved by a handful of companies and that other Slovenian companies need to become more export-oriented. Hribar considers that Slovenia should follow the example of Austria, where, since 2003, the Government and the Chamber of Commerce have joined forces to encourage companies to export through the Go International programme. Aleš Cantarutti, Director of the Centre for Competitiveness, has emphasised that the Chamber itself cannot carry out such a task and that the involvement of the Government and other institutions is required.

The OECD prepared and presented the Economic Survey of Slovenia for 2011 at Brdo pri Kranju. Amongst other things, the OECD proposed further pension scheme reforms that would increase the retirement age; the current government proposal stipulates 65 years of age for men and 63 for women, with the long-term aim being to equalise the age of retirement for both genders. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that the long-term impact of the current pension reform on public finances will be inadequate. It also suggests that public sector wages increase should be set aside and not suspended, and propose an increase in property and environmental taxes,

which are already high. Finally, the OECD estimated that Slovenia earmarks too much public money for education, which is, however, not enough effective. This is especially true for elementary schools and kindergartens, for which less money should be allocated according to the OECD, but even more so for university study, which should no longer be free; tuition fees and loans should be introduced; this is currently being considered and worked out by the Ministry of Higher Education. However, these OECD proposals were judged to be unacceptable for the Slovenian situation by Dr Stanislav Pejovnik, Rector of the University of Ljubljana. Other Slovenian participants accepted some of the reviews and disagreed with others. For example, Dr Janez Šušteršič from the Koper Faculty of Management noted that the recommendations of international institutions remained the same through the years. The reason behind this is the complex decision-making system on reforms in Slovenia, of which there is a lack of understanding, and the attitude toward a suggested change depends on who proposed it. The Minister for Finance, Dr France Križanič, stated that if long-term measures of fiscal stability are not supported by increased revenues, additional long-term measures will be needed, which should become clear by March or April. Dr Jože Mencinger, famous economist, said that the OECD

forecasts for pension reform for the year 2060 are meaningless. He also noted that structural reforms are, in fact, a reduction of social transfers. For Mencinger, inflation, dreaded by the OECD, represents an opportunity for reduction of debt, as the alternatives are likely to be bankruptcies and compulsory settlements.

Minister of Education Dr Igor Lukšič rejected the proposals to streamline the funding of kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, while Prof Dr Marjan Svetličič called for higher emoluments for university teachers. The crisis refuses to abate, particularly in the construction sector, which typically strengthens in times of exceptionally strong GDP growth due to the construction of highways providing the construction sector with a lot of work. According to Slovenian Statistical Office, the Slovenian construction sector has regressed to 2005 levels, i.e., the period before the financial crisis. The National Assembly passed insolvency legislation to improve payment discipline and bring domestic legislation in line with European law. According to the new law, invoices must be paid within 60 days, the state must pay invoices within 30 days, and invoices delayed by 30 days should be compulsorily registered for the offset. The Act also provides for expediting the process of compulsory composition, which should

be completed within two years. Although neither the Chamber of Craft nor the Chamber of Commerce is satisfied with this law, it is expected that the situation will gradually begin to improve, which will largely contribute to higher revenues generated by companies. The Slovenian Chamber of Commerce considers that the Government should have cooperated with the private sector in the preparation of the law, whereas members of the Chamber of Craft demand more government intervention and have threatened civil disobedience measures such as refusing to pay taxes, withdrawing money from banks, etc. Craft enterprises are generally opposed to compulsory compositions. Small and micro enterprises are by far the predominant type of business in Slovenia. Amongst these, construction and trade companies are experiencing the most difficulties. The rate of employment in these companies is low, as there are only about 15 small companies with more employees in Slovenia; most are family businesses with few employees. Thus, employment in Slovenia is mostly provided by large and medium-sized companies, and the failure of such companies always has a great impact. In the present situation of economic crisis and stronger foreign competition Slovenia begins to emphasise the importance of producing more food in Slovenia and buying food locally. Trade companies have already begun to change

their policy, and reduce their margins. The Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented awards for outstanding business achievements for 2010. The awards were handed to Chamber awards winners are: Jože Cegljar of Termoplast-Plama; Boštjan Gaberc of Mikrografija; Izidor Krivec of Celjske mesnine; Andrej Mate of Inles; Devid Palčič of Robotina; Stanislav Rozman of the NEK nuclear power plant; and Bogomir Strašek of KLS Ljubno. All these companies have successfully weathered the economic crisis and increased sales last year. The winners, who are also environmentally conscious, claim that without expansion into new markets there would be no success. Bonitetna hiša I, d.o.o. credit rating agency, which usually grants the Rating of the Year award to three companies each year, in the past two years decided not to present awards due to the financial crisis as well as other factors including the difficulties faced by company owners, which have often brought even very good companies to the brink of failure. They announced that the awards would be presented again next year. For 2010 they published a list of the 50 highest-rated Slovenian companies. As pointed out by Marko Batista, none of the companies that received the Rating of the Year award in recent years have failed.

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Igor Lukšič, Minister of Education and Sport



Stanislav Pejovnik, Rector of the University of Ljubljana

Andrej Pompe, Brand Business School, President and Programme Director, photo: archive

Twenty years from the Linden Leaf to I FEEL SLOVENIA

There is a 20-year span between the two brands, yet the two have never been so close to each other as they are today.



The 20th anniversary of the young state offers several rewarding opportunities. One is to again put on the table current and past events and view them from a different, more objective perspective. We cannot deny that our interest in life is primarily in the future; however, there is much we can learn from the past. And if something is good, why would we ignore it? One is sometimes left with a feeling that some things at some moments are being deliberately destroyed so that later they can be rebuilt. In Schumpeter's terms, claiming as he did that creative destruction is the driving force of progress, it would be undoubtedly reasonable to do. If this is

not the case, then wrong decisions have been made. The brand of a country can be a real brand, but it can also be only a Potemkin village or a cowboy town. The latter implies a short-term view, which does not fit with building strong brands. By this I mean that a brand is a long-term instrument which needs a carefully planned birth and even more careful care, education and growth. And not only that. Equally important are its core and contents, visibility and perception, as well as rational and above all emotional strength, which "moves mountains". A brand needs a soul.

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

Our national brand has two realities. Each is manifested in its own way. One was in effect in the eighties of the previous century; the other is in effect today. For both we can say that they are mostly associated with tourism. Each plays its own role, and each has advantages and disadvantages. Each brings its own results. And these results are different and it is important that we take them into consideration.

LINDEN LEAF

The linden leaf has somehow become a symbol of Slovenians. In fact, it was a by-product of tourism branding and related to efforts to strengthen the importance of tourism in Slovenia and for Slovenia. The idea of the campaign was entirely correct, since the strategy was based on the fact that a good brand must first be supported by the people associated with it (e.g. employees in an enterprise, tourism workers in tourism). The strategic objective was to develop awareness of the tourism product: the beauty, conditions and capacities of Slovenian tourism. What followed was a creation of awareness that, along with the physical elements, people are of the utmost importance for a good tourist service. The slogans SLOVENIA – MY COUNTRY! and TOURISM IS PEOPLE did not have an effect only on tourist workers but also on all Slovenians. The country grew on us even more, and our respect for ourselves and our own identity was greater.

We recognised our difference within the former country. We recognised that we deserved our own identity. We realised that the decision on our independence was the right move. And to reach this point, the linden leaf and all its communications were an inspiration to us. A strong identity was created. It was not just a matter of exceptional compliance; there was also a huge desire to use this logo for different purposes: for societies and companies, in transport, in crafts, for various communities and associations, and, of course, in tourism.

The linden leaf became a symbol representing the whole of Slovenia and was not at all a matter of dispute. It was a unanimous decision, similar to the unanimously adopted decision on the independence. Then its story ended and, at this point, it does not make any sense to look for the reason. It is important only to know what kind of potential is still available.

HOW TO MAKE THE DOMESTIC PUBLIC ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT I FEEL SLOVENIA?

It is a tough task to make a Slovenian enthusiastic about adopting an English phrase. And in a way, it neither makes sense nor is it ethical, since we have our own language, our culture and our pride. What should we do to maintain all the advantages of the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand and not start all over again? You will find the answer a few lines below. First, I need to explain about the current functioning



of the brand that people took for their own and what this means.

THE BRAND IS AN ASSISTANT

I need to outline the reasons why trademarks were created even in the nineteenth century and why they have nowadays exceeded all theoretical and practical limits. With the emergence of mass production, buyers in different parts of the market needed an assurance of a promised quality level and a repeated good experience. It was the trademark that assumed the role of a vendor or an intermediary between a provider and a consumer. We all know that the strongest ties are those among people. When such a role is assumed by a trademark, it must be incorporated into our best vendor or adviser. In other words, the trademark must become a personality with well-known properties, a recognisable view of the world, a distinctive image with human attributes. Accordingly, it will be easier to understand hereafter why a good trademark must have the ability and power of emotional acceptance and association.

A BRAND IS A SET OF PROMISES

At every moment when a person sees the brand, he must play in his mind a film about it; a film telling a story about promises, a story that touches people. The more a brand is capable of promising and, consequently, delivering, the greater the power it has. In addition to power, it also has the potential to expand, complement, compose, upgrade and otherwise enrich. Think about

the potential in the brand I FEEL SLOVENIA. At the moment, this is only potential.

LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO BRANDS

The theory of innovation includes the method of joining seemingly incompatible elements as an exceptional method of finding something new, advanced and more efficient and pleasing. This has been proved by Uncle Ben's sweet and sour sauce, and by Pavarotti's combining opera with pop and rock music. If graphic designers of any brand were asked whether it is possible to merge one brand design solution with another, they would probably give a negative answer. However, when linking different elements, we must only be interested in whether by merging it is possible to obtain a new synthesis. Of course it is. We need only create it. On the issue of the national brand, I am talking about a new synthesis that will bring a solution to many existing identity problems.

I FEEL SLOVENIA

The I FEEL SLOVENIA brand was created in an entirely different way than that which appears in textbooks. Among a number of proposals, a sentence in the English language was selected, which subsequently received its own surface on which its contents started to reflect with all its weight. In this way, a brand was created with mission, as I understand it, of an innovative approach to building the concept "Made in Slovenia". This was confirmed by those who played an active role in the birth of the brand. It was thus born with a sentence that was

placed in a green rhomboid – as a result, a professional explanation of this new development began.

Even though the brand was, from the outset, intended for use at all levels in Slovenia, it was mainly used for tourism, probably due to a lack of understanding rather than a lack of willingness. And in this context it is the tourism sector that has made significant progress. Success has been achieved abroad, while at home the enthusiasm of the Slovenian public can be measured in millimetres. In other areas, the brand is practically not applied.

A GOOD RESPONSE ABROAD

Against expectations, increasingly better responses to the brand were noted abroad, mainly in competitive tourism markets and among marketing professionals engaged in the marketing of countries. The brand even became a challenge for writing a doctoral thesis. Because it was different, it was quickly noticed. Luckily, this was the reason for not being abolished, which was the case with the Linden Leaf and Four Flowers brands. One was said to have exceeded the limits of its intended purpose, while the other was

considered non-functioning. Consequently, the mistake has been made twice: with respect to the first, there was a lack of understanding of what treasure it was hiding, while with respect to the other, there was a lack of understanding of the importance of the brand and branding in general.

I FEEL SLOVENIA IS A UNIQUE BRAND WITHOUT THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES

I FEEL SLOVENIA is an excellent national brand accepted outside the borders of Slovenia but, regrettably, faces difficulties in being accepted at home. All of us who understand the professional management of trademarks and branding are well aware that the brand will not succeed if not supported by the people who the brand represents. In fact, a brand of this kind is an inflated balloon. As a result, on the one hand, there is (in the eyes of external public) an increasingly visible and likeable brand and, on the other hand, there is a lack of support (with the exception of tourism and a few attempts in sport). The problem lies, therefore, in the domestic public. The issue is how to make the domestic public enthusiastic about the brand.



THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE DOMESTIC PUBLIC

In my view, the domestic public in Slovenia covers a wide range of Slovenians: from the population in general to all those engaged in various fields of the economy, politics, diplomacy, culture, science and education, as well as local town and village communities, local self-government, utilities, infrastructure, transport, tourism, other communities and, last but not least, religious communities. None of these different publics should remain indifferent. Indifference to the brand stems from two key assumptions: 1) there is a failure to understand the power of the brand and 2) the brand simply has not grown on people.

THE BRAND IS A PERSONALITY

At this level we need to ask how something grows on you. By force? By communication “bombing”? By means of a decree? By none of this. Something will grow on you if it is close to you. And what is the closest to a person? Another person, of course. I am aware that economists, politicians and diplomats, not to mention bankers and lawyers, have difficulties in accepting the fact that a trademark will be successful if it becomes a marketing personality (and not just a marketing tool for the purpose of differentiation on a competitive market). Irrespective of the level of understanding, we need to know that every successful brand is a personality characterised by entirely human qualities. And getting closer to a person only happens through human traits.

WE HAVE TO LIVE THE BRAND

Since the brand is a marketing personality, all of its supporters and ambassadors must live it. In case of the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand, it means that Slovenians have to live it; after all, it is the brand of all of us.

This is a brand representing our pride, our achievements, our people and relations, our products and services, our history and culture, our natural environment and other benefits. And how can we live the brand if we cannot get closer to it? This is about a match between two personalities, the personality of a Slovenian and the personality of the brand. In the four years since the birth of the brand, this has not happened. We are therefore looking for a way to make this happen. How? I believe that we should not throw away something that has already settled in our hearts, emitting positive vibrations for quite some time.

IS THE SATISFACTION OF THE BRAND CONSUMERS ENOUGH?

It has long been known that not only buyers and/or consumers but everybody must be satisfied with a brand. The domestic public should by no means be excluded. I am familiar with the fact that some action to make Slovenians enthusiastic about the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand has already been taken; however, real national pride in the brand has not been noted within Slovenia's borders. Yet, some of us are quite fond of using the brand outside of Slovenia.

WHAT IS THERE IN THE HEARTS OF SLOVENIANS AND WHY SHOULD IT BE FOREVER DELETED?

It took Slovenians a good half-decade to realise how beautiful our country is and what riches it has to offer. At first we said that Slovenia is our country and the country belonging to each of us (My country). Then we made it clear to ourselves that in all relations it is a person who plays a key role (in tourism this referred to the slogan “Tourism is people”) and we particularly drew attention to certain aspects that had been neglected but are

worthy of a human hand and management (a campaign entitled “We are looking for a good manager”). Our beautiful Slovenia was even referred to as the country “on the sunny side of the Alps”, which added a special charm. After gaining independence, everything was quickly stowed in a carefully closed box and, for some years, the feelings that these activities triggered between and in Slovenians were forgotten. It's a good thing that the box was not thrown away.

Why is this good? Because both studies and the answers of different generations reveal that the linden leaf is still deeply rooted and only the branches have been cut. I was in doubt about this and therefore held some group discussions in urban and rural settings. It is true that some of the 19-year olds did not know about the Linden Leaf or its significance; on the other hand, the other group of various ages was mostly familiar with the fact that the Linden Leaf was ours, that we are fond of it and that we identify with it. The rural community also agreed 100% with this view. And this is capital that may be used even now. We are not talking about financial capital, but emotional capital, which in any case is invaluable.

THE SOLUTION IS AT HAND

I believe that the linking of two exceptional brands, the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand and the Linden Leaf brand, would be an excellent solution. The association of the two solves the most burning issue of the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand, which is that Slovenians have not yet adopted it. If the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand was warmly accepted by foreigners, why wouldn't it win the hearts of Slovenians? Let us see how.

VERBAL AND GRAPHIC-SEMANTIC LEVEL

On a verbal level, two statements must be combined:

I FEEL SLOVENIA and MY COUNTRY. The solution becomes self-evident and conveys our feelings about Slovenia and about the love for our beautiful country. The current brand would keep the word SLOVENIA, but written in the Slovenian language (i.e. SLOVENIJA), while the slogan of the previous brand would keep the word MY (MOJA). In this way, we would obtain an emotionally charged slogan, MY SLOVENIA (MOJA SLOVENIJA), which need not be psychologically or semantically justified. Such an argument simply cannot be opposed, as in this case we would oppose ourselves.

The graphic design of the light green rhomboid would be kept the same, with the slogan MY SLOVENIA (MOJA SLOVENIJA) inside it.

Thus we would overcome one of the biggest grudges held against the phrase I FEEL SLOVENIA, which is that it is in the English language. No matter what the advocates of English may speak about global “Internetisation” and, consequently, about the globalisation of the English languages as a contemporary Esperanto, it will not help if a certain part of the Slovenian population does not accept English. In fact, the “Anglicisation” of Slovenia simply does not seem acceptable. One hundred and more years ago, we struggled against being dominated by the German language (and the remnants are still here: šraufenciger, širhakelel, poušter, etc.; today we are facing new viruses: skenslanje, printanje, lajkanje, etc.). If for nothing else, this is the reason that compels Slovenians into respecting, cherishing and cultivating their language. Simply for that reason, we need the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand in our language. Hence, its equivalent would be MOJA SLOVENIJA (MY SLOVENIA). This phrase contains the entire feeling and the feelings we have about Slovenia.





Prof Dr Manca Košir, publicist

To radiate hope

“To educate towards hope is one of the fundamental ethical values.”

Dr Alojzij Šuštar

“How are you?” an esteemed Slovenian gentleman asked me recently. “Excellent,” I replied cheerfully. To which he responded, “Well, if a Slovenian claims to feel that way, then that is a true miracle.” “This is my method of defiance,” I explained to him, waved and hurried on with my duties.

Yes, to be excellent, joyous and full of hope – this is my way of defeating the fear that creeps all over the world and also comes to my beautiful homeland, a way of defeating the insecurity which has got inside people’s bones, and the criticism, sensationalism, wailing and gnashing of teeth spouted by the mass media, which splashes out from too many mouths, like some obligatory mantra. It is true that much evil exists in this world, and that there have been a litany of injustices which are certain to continue in the future, that there are many corrupt, greedy and ruthless people in all the structures and institutions, oh, so true. However, it is equally true that the world is also full of beautiful and good things, that there is compassion, solidarity and empathy, and there will continue to be in the future – there are honest and hearty people who radiate hope. We truly live in a dual world, a world of good and evil, and it is our mission to decide whether we will support the light or the darkness.

There is a Native American story about two wolves. It goes like this: One evening, a Cherokee grandfather was telling his little grandson about the battle that takes place inside us. He said: “My grandson, this battle continuously takes place between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. One is called Evil. He is angry, envious, jealous, sad, greedy, arrogant, self-pitying, guilty, resentful, feels inferior, he lies, shows false pride, acts superior and is egotistical. The other is called Good. He is happy, peaceful, loving, hopeful, tranquil, merciful, friendly, well-intentioned, empathetic, generous, honest and compassionate. He is trusting.”

The little grandson thought about that and asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

Grandpa simply replied: “The one you feed.”

I decided to feed my good wolf. Every day, in every person, in all situations and events, I try to find the light. I see: Slovenia is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. With forests that no longer grow elsewhere, with water we can still drink from our taps at home, with air that we do not yet need to wear gas masks to breathe, with arable land that yields us rich harvests, with stars in the sky that glow brightly at night. With people with open hearts and charitable hands. It seems to me that in relation to the size of our population, we have the highest number of great artists and scientists, who are very successful abroad, but unfortunately sometimes a little less so at home,



Photo: archive

and this is because of that envious wolf in the souls of fearful people. Well, we have many great athletes who we know how to encourage, because it might be easiest to identify with them. We have innovative men and women in farming, who are guardians of nature and not its exploiters. The whole of Slovenia could be a boutique oasis of organically grown food! We have social entrepreneurship, which the state still does not know how to promote, yet its actors do not give up, but persist in starting new projects for the public good. Perhaps we also have the highest number of charitable organisations in relation to the number of inhabitants. I myself act as a volunteer in a hospice and those dying have taught me the most about life. About what is truly important and what is not, what is truth and what is illusion. That life has a profound meaning, if only we can recognise our role and the mission for which we were born right here and now. Therefore, I am glad to be living in Slovenia during this exciting time when huge changes – the likes of which have never before been seen by humanity – are transpiring.

I am aware that I am playing a part in creating a new world. A world with a higher consciousness and human beings with open hearts. I feel the positive changes that are happening. Consumerism is being substituted by the alternative lifestyles of simplicity and modesty, life’s focus is moving from the egocentric ME to the more collaborative community of US. We knit networks of friendship that cannot be torn apart by rivalry and aggressive energy. The good wolf is becoming stronger and Slovenia is a country which offers him a suitable environment. As more and more people follow Gandhi’s wisdom everyday: be the change you want to see in the world. Such a change requires internal maturity and responsibility, qualities which can best be taught in schools as well as in the family. Therefore, I have set up the “What kind of school do we want” civil initiative, which is helping to construct an excellent public elementary school. To teach for life, for a healthy self-image and personal growth, for creativity and freedom of spirit. For the joy of living. My new book entitled Žareti upanje (To Radiate Hope, translator’s note) has just been published, and features dozens of stories about Slovenia of wonderful people and amazing opportunities. Opportunities that, with trust, are becoming our feasible options.



Tina Košir, publicist and moderator of cultural events

Feel Slovenia?

It is only when I return from abroad that I really grasp how I feel about Slovenia.

When I return from a big vibrant city, Ljubljana embraces me with its calm convenience.

From where I live, I can reach the city centre in less than half an hour’s walk or a five to ten minute bus drive. A walk or a jog through the woods? I just put on my sports shoes and within seven minutes I’m on the top of Rožnik. A weekend holiday? I just jump in the car and I’m by the sea or in the mountains within the hour. Visitors to Slovenia are usually charmed by its unique combination of compactness and diversity. For Slovenians, this is all self-evident. Unfortunately, the beauty that stares you in the face is often overlooked.

Slovenia is indeed small, but it is spacious, and this is something I only realise when I return home from a city, where the streets are always crowded. I like the feeling of personal space. If I’m caught up in a large crowd, I feel claustrophobic. If my shoelaces come undone, I can tie them in the middle of the street without being afraid that the crowd will stomp all over me. A little luxury, for which I am grateful, as when I return from somewhere I sometimes feel this is not possible.

When I open the box of organic vegetables delivered to me every week, I feel Slovenia in the form of a child-like joy. A box full of colourful, aromatic goodness. How difficult would it be to arrange a supply of ecologically-grown fruit and vegetables elsewhere? I love greens so much, I whisper in my thoughts. We like to promote ourselves as “the green country on the sunny side of Alps” but in everyday life we often forget this. We would like to be considered the equals of “the big countries” in areas where we cannot possibly compete, and yet we do not take enough care of what is most precious to us. Therefore, I root for our sportsmen and sportswomen and support all those who are working to develop innovative projects in Slovenia, in harmony with nature and for the long-term benefit of the community.

As I am self-employed in the field of culture, I think a little less kindly on Slovenia when signing contracts, as extensive intellectual work is very poorly paid. These thoughts take the form of anger or even rage when I call after a month or so after the due date stipulated in the contract and have to beg them to pay my fee – this would be entirely unnecessary in a normal state of affairs, as compliance with payment deadlines should present the very cornerstone of good practice. I feel I would be wasting my breath if I explained how this has become standard practice, with cultural workers carrying out their work without even having a contract in place, and being kept in the dark in advance about the fee – “we will discuss this later, what is the problem?” Friends from abroad are always amazed when I complain about this. Is this anarchy and exploitation of people really allowed to go on in Slovenia in the field of intellectual work? Sadly it is.



Photo: archive

Why then would someone even want to work as an independent contractor, journalist, researcher or cultural worker in the first place? There are two reasons: the first of which is that there are not many jobs in this area, and the second reason is that the institutions which employ those people are often set in their ways, and not amenable to creativity or fresh ideas. I see this as one of Slovenia’s main problems. In Slovenia, there are many talented and bright individuals possessing huge drive, but who do not feel that the system affords them adequate support – rather the opposite, in fact. Talented young scientists, contractors and creators are more frequently venturing abroad – in some respects this is excellent as it demonstrates that we live in a day and age where this is possible. A little less excellent, however, is that the reason for them doing so is the feeling that they do not have any options or support here. Those visiting foreign universities often feel fearful of experiencing something new and different.

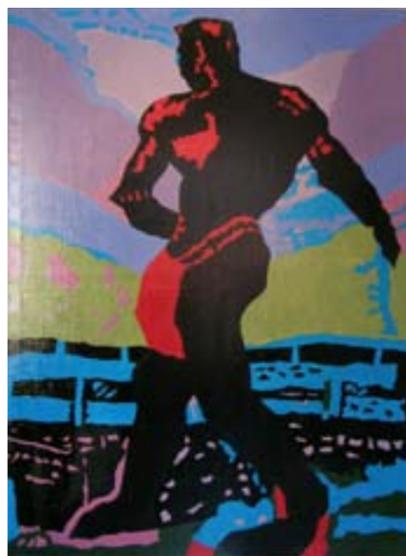
Fear is the biggest issue in Slovenia. Surveys indicate that fear is a decisive factor in young people choosing to study. This is not because they are passionate about gaining knowledge in a desired field, nor down to an entrepreneurial spirit, but because they have to do something to earn money. However, as every good baker knows, bread which is baked without love will not be very tasty. We will not starve to death when we have such bread available, but nobody will really like it.

A major change in Slovenia would be if we relaxed, banished fear, fell in love with creativity and supported each other. If we could only sweep open the doors of the institutions and bureaucracy and let some fresh air in. If we could only put the environment and people first. Are these unrealistic dreams? Maybe it is really difficult to imagine such a Slovenian reality, but it is worth the effort as there are probably a lot of people who would like to feel this way.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

Austellung Laibach Kunst, Perspektive 1980–2011

Visual Works of Laibach in Maribor



It is a little surprising that what is presumably the largest exhibition of visual works of the group Laibach will not be organised next year, when Maribor is the European Capital of Culture, but has been organised this year instead. The name and work of the group is one of the best-known art “items” from Slovenia on the international art and music scene, and the attention attracted by this (perhaps too) early exhibition reflects this.

The exhibition, whose title *Austellung Laibach Kunst, Perspektive 1980–2011* consistently follows the provocation that use of German and the memories of Nazism connected with this language caused in this (Slavic) area at the beginning of the group’s career, covers as many as 12 rooms of the current Maribor Art Gallery. The new gallery, which is one of the most ambitious construction plans in the country planned for the next year, will open in early 2012. In the upper-floor rooms, the group exhibits ten installations while the lower-floor rooms host the new work *Artist Perspective* created by the group for this exhibition. This work partly relates to the history of the city. The exhibited works thus consist of multimedia installations, classical oils, watercolours, mixed media works, photographs, graphics, and film and video. They include works from the private collections of Neil Rector and Daniel Miller, works by Jane Štravs and Sašo Podgoršek, and objects from the archives of the Maribor Regional Museum and the Anatomy Institute of the University of Ljubljana. The exhibition was dedicated to the recently deceased academic painter Janez Knez (1931–2011) from Trbovlje, whose role was concisely assessed by group member Ivan Novak: “Without him there would be no Laibach. Much of his work is in these paintings.”

Novak added that not all of the works of the group had been put into the exhibition, but that they have included all those that constitute their programme core and which had been made in the early 1980s

when the activities of Laibach had borne most social commitment as it could be stated that they had brought about direct social and even political consequences. Most of their early works were bought in the 1990s by American art collector Neil Rector, which means that an important part of the cultural heritage from an important period of transformation of Slovenian society has been in a way alienated. Unfortunately, for it seems that the value of such creativity has increased through time.

The event, undoubtedly broader than usual exhibitions, is in fact an overview of the development of the basic iconography of Laibach, and enables a comprehensive reflection on the artistic content and elements of presentation employed by the group in its activities, mostly presenting its artistic practice as a provocation and deviation from the supposedly immanent contents. Curator Simona Vidmar, who prepared the exhibition and strongly relied on her Berlin colleague Claudia Richter in the process, has probably followed this temporal relevance especially and mostly presented the works from the early period of the group. Large inscriptions and quotes from the different artistic manifestos of the group clarifying individual stages of the work’s creation stress an unusual, but artistically consistent criticism of the totalitarian society to which Laibach held a merciless mirror, and this importantly contributed to a rapid development of auto-reflection. On the one hand, visitors wonder at the practically incredible innovation of the artistic creativity of the group, which developed its criticism from a sophisticated reinterpretation of social stereotypes frequently shown in visual art creations that are considered social axioms; on the other hand, they become aware of the power of the society of 20 years ago, which was, after all, capable of looking in the mirror and changing. The question now is whether this ability is still at the same level as it was then.

Hana Souček Morača, photo: Miha Fras

CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN THE SHAPE OF GIBANICA

At the end of February, Ljubljana played host to the fifth biennial festival of contemporary dance, the Gibanica, which was organised by the Contemporary Dance Association of Slovenia with the support of the Ministry of Culture and the City Municipality of Ljubljana. This year’s festival, which took place at several venues across Ljubljana, presented a select choice of Slovenian dance productions and was complemented by two panel discussions, one of which was entitled *Institutionalising Contemporary Dance* and was held at the Ministry of Culture, while the other discussion was *Contemporary Dance Network*.

The festival saw the participation of 57 contributing artists and focused on three goals. Their aim was to present Slovenian contemporary dance productions to foreign selectors and the home audience in order to popularise this genre of dance and cultivate a new audience. They also sought to promote structural solutions conducive to establishing improved working conditions in the field of contemporary dance. According to the organiser’s data, 1,600 people attended the performances staged at this year’s festival, and the total number of visitors for all the Gibanica events exceeded 2,000. The festival was graced with the presence of as many as forty foreign selectors who watched the presentation of Slovenian contemporary dance performances over the past two years. At the closing ceremony, the symbolic audience award – a culinary delight characteristic of Prekmurje, the *gibanica* cake – was presented for the performance entitled *Duet 012* by Rosana Hribar and Gregor Luštek, and produced by Plesni Teater Ljubljana (Dance Theatre Ljubljana). The dancers’ performance blended different dance styles and techniques, and the artists utilised contemporary dance to tell a shared artistic and intimate story. The performance was also awarded second prize by a panel of expert judges at the 24th International Competition of Choreographers in Hanover, Germany.

With regard to eastern European cultural contexts, contemporary dance in Slovenia has the longest history which, after some ups and downs, has seen its production increase over the past four decades, as concluded by Andreja Rauch Podrzavnik, Blaž Lukan and Virve Sutinen, the festival’s selectors.

This year marks 84 years of contemporary dance in Slovenia, a history decorated with numerous examples of international cooperation and positive reactions from audiences abroad. Take the *Beton-tanc* Dance Company as an example; their performance, created in tandem with the Latvian group, *Umka.lv*, entitled *Show your face!*, finished its fifth tour of the United States at the end of January, by which time they had staged thirteen appearances in four cities. They encountered passionate audiences and received critical acclaim. Among other things, the *Los Angeles Times* noted: “Well, this is Eastern European theatre, where the music is composed by a band called *Silence*.” The *Time Out Chicago* observed that: “*Show*

Your Face! is, appropriately, as disciplined and precise as military protocol.” *Zamrznjene podobe* (*Frozen Images*) by Wanda and Nova de Viator boasts guest appearances in the Netherlands, Italy, Croatia, and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The *Spomenik G2* (*G2 Monument*) performance is part of *What to Affirm? What to Perform?*, an international project in which the *Maska* Institute cooperates with the Centre for Drama Art Zagreb, the National Centre for Dance Bucharest and the Vienna-based *Tanzquartier*. The Slovenian-Israeli dance duo of Domen Šega and Maya Levy is the closing production of the *Nomad Dance Academy*, a Balkan network study programme which has travelled the countries of the southern and western Balkans over the past three years. The *Novi list* newspaper, published in Zagreb, wrote that the *Sad sam /almost 6/ (Now I am /almost 6/)* performance was observed by the audience in deep introspective silence and, when it ended, was greeted with sustained and heartfelt applause.

The artistic board of the Gibanica festival, composed of Goran Bogdanovski, Tamara Bračič Vidmar, Rok Vevar, Alma R. Selimović, Mojca Zupanič and Sandra Dorem set itself the objective to expand Gibanica by incorporating activities which boost the status, visibility and recognisability of Slovenian contemporary dance in foreign cultural spaces. To this end, and for the purpose of establishing a “Slovenian Dance Network”, this project was financially backed by the Ministry of Public Administration, with the Ministry of Culture providing support in 2011 and 2012 in the form of 1.5 million euros and an investment in the construction of a contemporary dance centre. One outstanding issue however remains, and that is how to enhance postproduction and distribution of contemporary dance outside Ljubljana, while at the same time effectively introducing it to a geographically removed audience, educational institutions and potential production partners.

The next Gibanica will take place in the spring of 2013. The organisers are announcing a format which will be nothing like the previous five events, as this new arrangement will take its lead from the desire for decentralisation, making the Gibanica a travelling dance coffeehouse.

Performances at the Gibanica 2011 festival

Beton-tanc Ltd.: Tam daleč stran (Someplace Far Away); *Uvod v ego-logijo (Introduction to Ego-logy)*; Mateja Bučar: *Zelena luč (Green Light)*; Ivica Buljan, Jordi Casanovas, Edward Clug, Iztok Kovač, David Zambrano / EnKnapGroup: *10 Mini Projects*; Domen Šega and Maya Levy: *Glej me, kako ljubim; bo dovolj? (See Me How I Love; Will It Be Enough?)*; Jurij Konjar: *Goldbergove variacije (Goldberg’s Variations)*; Mala Kline: *Bliss*; Janez Janša and Dušan Jovanović: *Spomenik G2 (G2 Monument)*; Rosana Hribar and Gregor Luštek: *Duet 012*; Evin Hadžialjević, Maja Kalafatić, Špela Tovornik, Jasna Zavodnik and Ajda Tomazin: *(P)razno (Empty/Miscellaneous)*; Milan Tomášik and Alexander Gottfarb: *Baga-Basta*; Bojan Jablanovec and Jaka Lah: *Pure Performance*; Matija Ferlin: *Sad sam almost 6 (Now I am /almost 6/)*; Wanda and Nova de Viator: *Zamrznjene podobe (Frozen Images)*; Leja Jurišič and Teja Reba: *Med nama (Between Us)*.



Source: STB

Presentations of Slovenia at the I FEEL SLOVENIA stand in tourism trade fairs and exchanges

Presentations of Slovenia and its tourism in fairs and exchanges abroad constitute a key marketing and communication tool of the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB). On an annual basis, the STB organises more than 40 fairs in Europe and selected distant markets. The STB appears at fairs and exchanges in partnership with the Slovenian tourist economy and representatives of various tourist associations or local organisations.

SLOVENIAN TOURISM STAND

In 2008, a new standard stand was selected for communicating the Slovenian brand I FEEL SLOVENIA and promotion of Slovenian tourism.

The idea is based on the concept of harmony of senses and feelings and, with the logo I FEEL SLOVENIA, fully complies with the handbook of the Slovenian brand. The design is based on recognizable graphics of pure and simple forms, natural materials and attractive motifs arousing strong associations. The stand can be adjusted to various sizes of exhibition premises, ranging from 50 to 200 square metres.

Its design is focused on natural and environmentally friendly materials. The prevailing material is wood. Pale maple wood is used for all the counters, partition walls and storage room battens, while chairs and tables are made of cherry wood, which is slightly darker and more reddish. This wood combination gives the stand more vivacious and cheerful appearance.

Openness and accessibility of the stand is made possible by the ceiling structure, which allows a transparent view of all the ongoing activities at the stand. Large-scale photographs, positioned within the storage area, which is, if possible, located at the centre of the stand, provide visibility and identification of the stand among the other material that is otherwise found at event locations. At the information desk, which is designed in a recognisable form of the logo for Slovenian brand, each exhibitor has, under the title of the company, a photo that provides an opportunity to present its products or/ and services.

The stand first appeared abroad at one of the world's largest tourist exchanges – the WTM (World Travel Market) in London in 2008, where it also won the award as the “Best Stand for Doing Business”. At fairs, we approach potential visitors to Slovenia through a presentation aimed at stimulating all of the senses of a visitor: Sight is approached through the structure, made from natural and environmental friendly materials, equipped with attractive motifs of Slovenia, arousing strong associations in visitors, and through the presentation of typical Slovenian customs, traditions and landscapes, which are, as part of animation, carried out at the stand by individual partners of the Slovenian tourism economy. Taste and smell are targeted by culinary delights, tasting Slovenian dishes and wines from different Slovenian regions, prepared by trained and experienced catering staff. The reception refreshments are organised by the STB or partners from Slovenian tourism. Hearing is approached through traditional Slovenian music, performed by various Slovenian musicians, who are often an indispensable part of the team at the stand. Touch is stimulated through promotional and eco gifts, offered to business partners and visitors to the stand so that a part of Slovenia can become part of their every day life.



Slovenian Tourism stand



Eco instructions

THE ‘GREEN’ PHILOSOPHY AT FAIRS AND EXCHANGES

The STB maintains that sustainable or “green” tourism provides a development opportunity for Slovenia. It is the response of all stakeholders in tourism to changes in the environment, with a view to ensuring the long-term competitiveness of Slovenian tourism and improving the quality of life of Slovenia’s inhabitants.

Green philosophy is a guiding principle for presentations of Slovenia in international fairs and exchanges. At fairs in 2010, the Slovenian stand presented a number of novelties.

One project worth mentioning is “Eco reincarnation” which is in accordance with the sustainable development of the Slovenian tourism and promotes eco-friendly behaviour.

“Eco Reincarnation” aims to present what people can make by using waste or used materials (including old catalogues, waste paper, padlocks and elements of the old standard stand). New promotional products and small gifts are 100% recycled – made of all kinds of already used materials. Old promotional materials, such as flags, catalogues and posters, which represented Slovenia in the past, have been redesigned into new products and re-used for the promotion of Slovenia – materials have thus been reincarnated and assumed a new life, suggesting the “Eco Reincarnation” name.

Going green at the stand is also made possible by Bluetooth technology which through modern and environmentally friendly technology allows a paperless approach to marketing, thus contributing to reduced consumption of catalogues and, consequently, of paper. The idea of presenting Slovenia in this innovative and environmentally friendly way follows on from a successful marketing campaign at Jože Pučnik airport, carried out by STB in partnership with its partners, the Aerodrom Ljubljana, d.d. company, and the Creativ Interaktiv, d.o.o. company. Passengers at the airport can thus receive all information necessary for their stay in Slovenia on their mobile phone via Bluetooth, free of charge. A similar, but slightly more sophisticated concept is also used at events.

Bluetooth technology enables direct access to a consumer/tourist. It offers the opportunity of reaching a core group at a certain location, providing an attractive and free-of-charge transfer of multimedia contents to a mobile phone, where the user can access it without limits, even when the event has ended. Bluetooth technology is used at the stand for distribution of notices, information and brochures, digitally, without any printing or other harmful impact on the environment. This Bluetooth marketing is carried out using low radio frequencies with low energy consumption. All the content and mobile catalogues are translated into English and the language of the host country, with a view to getting closer to tourists from the region.

NEW FOR 2011 – BUSINESS BREAKFASTS

In 2011, the Slovenian stand’s culinary presentation has been enriched with business breakfasts, with the aim of going beyond the traditional afternoon reception for business partners and journalists. Business breakfasts reveal a diverse selection of Slovenian cuisine as an additional tourist product of Slovenia. This new feature was first introduced at the WTM London tourism exchange in November of last year. Well received by business partners, business breakfasts will remain a component of fair presentations in the future.



“Eco Reincarnation” counter



Promotion of Slovenia by Bluetooth technology.



In Slovenia, loves goes through the stomach, WTM 2010



Presentation of Slovenian cuisine at Ferien-Messe Wien 2011



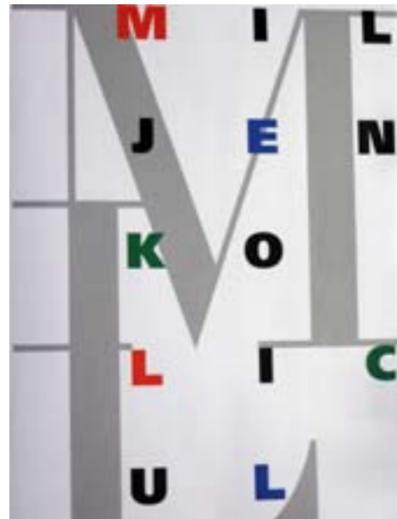
Presentation of Slovenian cuisine at BIT Milano 2011



Albert Kos, photo: STA

MILJENKO LICUL (1946–2009)

Retrospective exhibition of Licul's design oeuvre



Over the past few decades, industrial and graphic design in Slovenia has taken a leap forward in terms of development and established a presence on the international stage, with Slovenian designers garnering a string of awards and recognitions, both at home and abroad. Miljenko Licul, whose design work has characterised a whole three decades of Slovenian history, ranks at the very pinnacle of creators involved in graphic design.

It would be no exaggeration to attribute historic significance to Licul's work as his superlative design messages have embodied turning points in Slovenia's history – both before and after independence. He will linger long in the memories of many Slovenians as the designer of the tolar – Slovenia's first very own currency – which was introduced soon after independence in 1992, and the banknotes and coins which remained in circulation for more than a decade and a half, up until the adoption of the euro. He also designed the first Slovenian passport and identity card, as well as the new health insurance card, in turn contributing to the creation of the identity of a fledgling independent state. Even after bidding farewell to the tolar and adopting the euro, the imprint of Licul's creativity among Slovenians and even Europeans can still be seen on a daily basis – the reverse side of the Slovenian euro coin was designed by none other than he himself.

Needless to say, these are only the best known and most widely recognised achievements in Licul's extensive creative oeuvre, which further comprises corporate designs for various Slovenian companies and institutions as well as artistic designs for a variety of art monographs and books, newspapers and magazines in addition to a whole host of exhibitions. Licul's work is highly diverse and his projects can be thematically divided into the realms of politics, the economy and tourism, culture, art, education, health care, sports and the state.

In 2008, just a year prior to his premature departure from this world, Miljenko Licul was presented the Prešeren Award for his life's work, which is the highest Slovenian accolade for outstanding achievements in artistic creativity. He was the first to receive this award in the sphere of design, which symbolically placed design among the ranks of the recognised artistic disciplines. Perhaps by coincidence, the Prešeren Award was received at the same time by the literary translator, Janez Gradišnik, which symbolically put visually expressed communication on an equal footing with verbal communication.

In his design work, Licul worked closely at all times not only with his clients, but also his myriad artistic associates. After working at the Zodiak Studio, he held the post of Art Director of the Diptih studio. For many years, he was also a member of the Znak group. He studied architecture and design in Ljubljana where he lectured in typography at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design. He had long-standing ties with the renowned sculptor, Janez Boljka, for whom he staged several exhibitions in Slovenia and around the world, and his work on Slovenian tolar banknotes and coins led him to team up with Zvone Kosovelj and Rudi Španzel. He designed the reverse side of Slovenian euro coins, in collaboration with Maja Licul and Janez Boljka.

On 10 February, a retrospective exhibition of Licul's design oeuvre was put on display at the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana. The exhibition featured close to 700 of Licul's works or about one-tenth of his entire body of work. The exhibition is complemented by a monograph, in which Licul's associates, clients, friends and life and creative partners write about his individual projects and the backgrounds behind their realisation. The exhibition and monograph together form a complete portrait of this prolific Slovenian designer whose knowledge of tradition and contemporary design directions and movements allowed him to combine and merge, in a deliberate manner, the elements of the old and new, thereby creating his own, inimitable style which will continue to serve as a valuable tradition and inspiration to all those who work in design or are yet to venture down this path of creativity.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, attended the opening of the exhibition and took the opportunity in his keynote address to highlight the importance of the role played by Licul's aesthetic avant-garde design of the first Slovenian currency in establishing Slovenia's presence on the world stage.

We have now bade farewell to the Slovenian currency designed by Licul and we no longer use some of the other documents that bear the hallmark of his visual design; however, a plethora of design and graphic solutions and creations bearing the author's signature and creative imprint are still with us today and will continue to be in the future, as they have taken root in our consciousness and, in turn, play a part in creating the culture of our life.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

THE MYSTIQUE OF JAPAN THROUGH THE EYES OF A SLOVENIAN

At the start of the year, an interesting photo exhibition was held at the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre. Gorazd Vilhar, a graduate of Art History at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, prepared an exhibition entitled *Božanski detajl* (Divine Detail) for which he used the classic photographic film – a veritable rarity in this day and age. Vilhar, who has been living in Japan since 1985, is consumed with a passion to discover this land, particularly its religious and cultural aspects or details, and has exhibited several remarkable photographs of religious ceremonies, impressive sacral architecture, elegant geishas and gardens – all of which are undeniably unique to Japan and exude the Japanese perception of the aesthetic. Vilhar is married to an American publicist, Charlotte Anderson, with whom he published a book in 2009 entitled *Incomparable Japanese Gardens*, featuring 150 outstanding photographs of the most beautiful Japanese gardens, showing just how much this topic has truly evoked the couple's passion. Vilhar's or Slovenian photographic perspective of a culture distant to us therefore bears witness to the universality and beauty that culture brings into our lives.



Vesna Žarkovič

SLOVENIA IN US

During the Prime Minister's working visit to Washington, Ambassador Roman Kirn organised a reception at the Slovenian Embassy on the occasion of Prešeren Day, the Slovenian cultural holiday. Prime Minister Pahor addressed the assembled audience and opened the exhibition "Slovenia in US" featuring photographs of Slovenia and its Lipizzaner horses by Alenka Slavinec.

SLOVENIA IN US, the photography exhibition is a story of love, peace and courage. The main characters are world renowned Lipizzaner horses, which are deeply interlinked with the Slovenian identity and cultural heritage. For more than 430 years they represent beauty, freedom, community, respect, determination, elegance, wisdom, wildness, pride, braveness... Each of the 20 exhibited photos represents one year of Slovenian existence as an independent country, from its declaration of independence in 1991 to the present, each with its own topic.

SLOVENIA IN US will be exhibited first at the Embassy of Slovenia in Washington and will be open to the public from February 9 till June 17, 2011. It will be continued by a second exhibition, focused more on the individuality, self-confidence and purity, which will be open at the Festival Ljubljana on June 29, 2011.

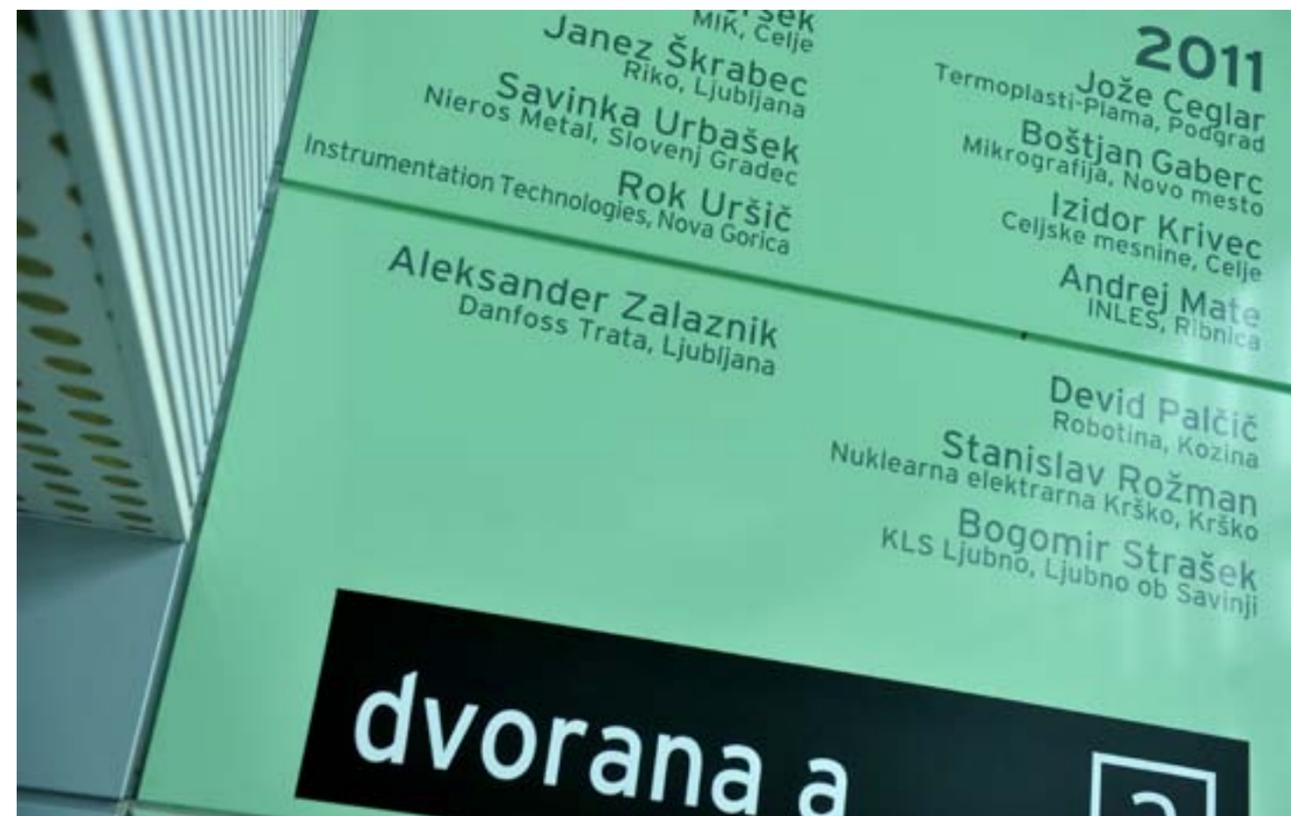
Alenka Slavinec a photographer and film producer, who was born in Ptuj, the oldest town in Slovenia, fell in love with photography, when she was 10 years old. She studied social sciences at University of Ljubljana and, since her graduation, worked in international marketing, sales, photography, advertising and public relations for various companies, including Saatchi & Saatchi. Since 2006, Alenka has been official photographer for The Slovenia Times of Ljubljana. She holds a certificate in Film Production from New York Film Academy (NYFA). Her movie debut (in 2008) "The World Didn't Know He Landed in a Poem" was a documentary about the renowned Slovenian photographer Stojan Kerbler. Among other directors, she collaborates with the famous Jasny Voiteck and Aksel Stasny, with whom she collaborated on "Coming home", which was an official selection at the Montreal and Magnolia film festivals. Her latest production is "All That Glitters", feature drama (2010). Alenka is cultural manager at Museum of Transitory Art (MoTA), and has just begun working with Wayward Pen Foundation in NYC, a not-for profit cross-cultural organization dedicated to the exchange between new and emerging European, primarily Slovenian, and American artists.



Jože Osterman, photo: STA

Awards for Excellence in the Economy

For the 43rd time, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has made awards to seven people from companies that have proved it is possible to succeed in business in very unfavourable conditions, such as those caused by the economic crisis, which affected Slovenia more than most other EU Member States.



Jože Ceglar, the manager of the Termoplasti-Plama company of Podgrad near Ilirska Bistrica, was the head of the company 30 years ago. He left after a time because his vision of development differed from that of the workers and trade unions at the time, but then returned in 2002 and saved the company from a severe crisis. The company, which manufactures technical films for the rubber industry, has as much as a 50% market share in Europe while the generated value per employee is far above the average in this field. The company is a good supporter of the social life in its community, while Mr Ceglar enjoys great popularity and respect among the local people because of his modest way of life. We may also say that Bogomir Strašek, the manager of KLS Ljubno, which has recently become one of the most important manufacturers of car equipment in Europe and worldwide, is also a veteran displaying excellence in a similar field. Value added per employee in this company is also high above the average in the field; their programme of starter ring gears has as much as 40% of the European market and 12% of the global market, while their gears are found in the engines of as many as 26 car marques!

The Mikrografija company of Novo mesto is one of the leading providers on the market of electronic archiving and electronic documentary systems. Its young manager,

Boštjan Gaberc, who is also the owner of the company, has created an exceptional working environment where mostly young people with an innovative approach and excellent technological solutions have built an extraordinary business capable of covering the growing needs in this field and already successfully exporting their know-how. High technology is also the field of Robotina of Kozina, managed by David Palčič and providing services of highly competitive engineering in the field of renewable sources and efficient use of energy: the integration of the company with its environment, the links with universities, where it acquires a considerable part of the basis for its new products – all this testifies to an exceptional sense of development of modern business relationships ensuring the reliable growth of the company.

Contrary to some similar Slovenian companies which have gone bankrupt in the last few years, the large company Celjske mesnine from Celje, managed by Izidor Krivec, has achieved excellent business results in all elements of its business: an increase in volume, profitability and exports, as well as successful development of new products. Of particular importance is its exceptional environmental orientation, since it has considerably reduced the use of energy products and the quantity of waste. Another exemplary quality is its

work within its community to support social life. Something similar may be said for the company Inles of Ribnica, managed by Andrej Mate, MSc. Despite strong competition in the field of wood processing, its programme of windows and front doors has created a tradition of an excellent brand throughout 60 years. The company is environmentally conscious and supports many cultural and sport activities in its native Ribnica, with one excellent handball team bearing its name.

The manager of the Nuclear Power Plant Krško, Dr Stanislav Rožman, has held his position since 1988; he has therefore devoted practically all of his most creative years to a company continuously under public scrutiny. Besides stability in the production of energy, the successful operation of this company shows especially in the field of safety, respect towards the environment and the trust of the local population, with the company passing this difficult test with flying colours. In all its years of operation, it has not encountered any major problems, and the strategy of constant technological upgrading has contributed to the fact that it is now possible to estimate the role of energy generated by nuclear power plants more objectively and rationally than it was at the beginning of the nuclear era.



Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia – 160 Years

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, which presents itself as the biggest independent, voluntary, interest and not-for-profit economic group celebrates its 160th anniversary. The source of its work was the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts of Carniola, undoubtedly an extremely important economic community for Slovenia, which was founded in 1851 under the leadership of its first president, wholesaler Lambert Luckmann. The birth of this new community can thus be closely linked to the “spring of nations” in 1848, when Slovenians were winning many of the new attributes of an independent nation.

Which organisation is therefore more competent and more authoritative in awarding its most successful members than this? Although it experienced a considerable change in 2007 by abolishing compulsory membership for economic organisations and introducing voluntary membership, it can be said that its share and influence on the processes of forming and harmonising conditions in which the economy operates has not reduced, and that it continues to be considered the most credible representative of the economic field by its partners. The success of its work is fur-



ther proven by the fact that the Slovenian economy, despite the turbulence and crises that have often shattered our area in these 160 years, has always kept the reputation of a relatively well-developed, reliable and successful manufacturer. This includes the present time of the global crisis.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia introduced its system of the most important economic awards 42 years ago, as the first awards were given in 1969. Those times were crucial in many ways: the Slovenian economy, then a part of the Socialist system, began to escape the rigid frames of the planned economy relatively quickly and boldly faced the market challenges. It may be said with certainty that it was the Slovenian economy that brought about totally new approaches not known anywhere else in the Socialist world; the result was a solidly functioning mix of market- and plan-oriented companies, among which more and more became capable of competing in the most demanding global markets. Those years saw the emergence of strong brands such as Iskra, Gorenje, Meblo, Elan, and of products such as Cockta, Barcafe, Rex Armchair, which are still valued today. The new self-confidence of Slovenian economic operators, then boosted by the excellence of their production, continued for at least the two or three following decades. Although it is impossible to ignore the great crisis and the economic breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, which caused enormous strain for the Slovenian economy, too, it should not be overlooked that Slovenia, due to its relatively successful economy, was declared “the world display window of Socialism” in 1988, thus representing an islet in the sea of declining Socialist economic production. The economy’s relatively peaceful and successful entry into the capitalist system even after the loss of the Yugoslav markets in 1991 is certainly the result of these sound foundations.

The CCIS awards, formerly named after Boris Kraigher, the tragically deceased minister of economy from the 1960s who was one of the founders of the new paths of Slovenian economy, are awards to individuals for their successful management of companies revealed through longer periods. It is therefore understandable that the list of former award-winners (as many as 305 by now, with “only” 18 women among them) contains virtually all important people ever active in the economic field. From this aspect, the awards have had a valuable role in promotion and in helping to create an economic elite as is very important in a functioning European society.



It must be stressed that successful managers are highly appreciated and often very popular among Slovenians, who, according to international surveys, are people with a strong working culture. People who set an example and bring inspiration! This was particularly true in the times when the social system promoted the maximum social and material equality as the basic principle, and managers lived a similar life as their workers, so were often appreciated as their equals. Of course, some names now inspire bitter feelings as some simply could not maintain the qualities that had made them our laureates; their companies experienced a decline or were even wound up; in a dynamic structure such as the economy, time is a more severe judge than anywhere else.

These anomalies, however, cannot affect the respect for the CCIS awards and their

winners. Because the Slovenian public is well aware of the importance of the excellence awards in a field that offers a living for us all, the awards ceremony is an event that may easily be compared with the award of the Prešeren prizes for culture. The road leading to the award is also not easy : since 1990, a special committee, including a number of former winners, has made its selection on the basis of 66 numerical criteria, considering the general market and export results, internationalisation and establishment in the European Union, as well as fast and effective market expansion, clear development strategy, innovations and especially business and entrepreneurial culture and integration in the environment in which a company operates. The size of companies is considered separately, as awards are given for operation of small, medium-sized and large companies.

Polona Prešeren, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

Helping frogs

In recent years, there has been a nice ecology initiative spreading across Slovenia – helping frogs. At this time of year, frogs, toads and newts begin their annual migration from hibernating places to breeding sites. Many amphibians are killed crossing the roads on their migratory paths.

Various organisations have decided to help these endangered amphibians by preventing this decimation of the population by traffic. On their breeding sites, the frogs reproduce and lay their eggs into different types of water. While migrating, frogs and amphibians are being massacred on dangerous road sections, also called “black spots” for frogs and amphibians all around Slovenia.

This is surely one of the loveliest and the most encouraging ecology initiatives. All across Slovenia, volunteers are putting up protective fences and carrying amphibians across the road. One of the black spots for amphibians is the Mlačevo-Račna road, not far from Ljubljana. The area’s population of amphibians is dense due to its moist and mushy terrain. With frogs migrating and crossing roads with heavy traffic, the death toll for amphibians was high and the population substantially decreased. The Radensko Polje landscape park, however, while still in development, decided to put an end to this. For several years, the park has been organising the “Helping the Frogs across the Road” campaign.

“Last year we managed to carry approximately 22,500 amphibians across the road in ten days. The project wouldn’t have been as successful without the help of volunteers and local societies,” said a spokesperson for the Radensko Polje landscape park.

Radensko Polje stretches to the southeast of Grosuplje and is the smallest of the nine Karst fields in Slovenia. Specific water conditions form different water bodies, which enables the reproduction of numerous amphibian species, finding the different types of water habitats to be suitable breeding sites. In the flora and fauna inventory of the year 2000, there were 12 documented amphibian species at Radensko Polje. It was also confirmed that the common salamander, a very rare animal in this area, also lived there.

Amphibians typically migrate between hibernation sites, breeding sites and summer habitats. At Radensko Polje, their migratory corridor crosses the very busy Mlačevo-

Račna regional road. At this black spot each spring, a major portion of the amphibians were being run over on their migratory path. This is an extremely delicate issue for their vulnerable population. Within the framework of its development, in 2008 the Radensko Polje landscape park decided to deal with this problem with the “Helping the Frogs across the Road” campaign, which began with amphibians being carried across the road at the most critical road sections in the period of their most intense migration. The project was upgraded with workshops and by raising the awareness of the local population. Special workshops also took place in elementary schools and day care centres.

The following year the campaign was continued, and protective fences for amphibians were put up by the side of the road. “Since the campaign proved to be a success and we carried more than 15,000 amphibians across the road in a few weeks, we decided to continue putting up the fence,” said the spokesperson for the park.

This year, the campaign has already started. As the night temperature rises above zero, the frogs wake up and start their spring migration by heading towards breeding sites.

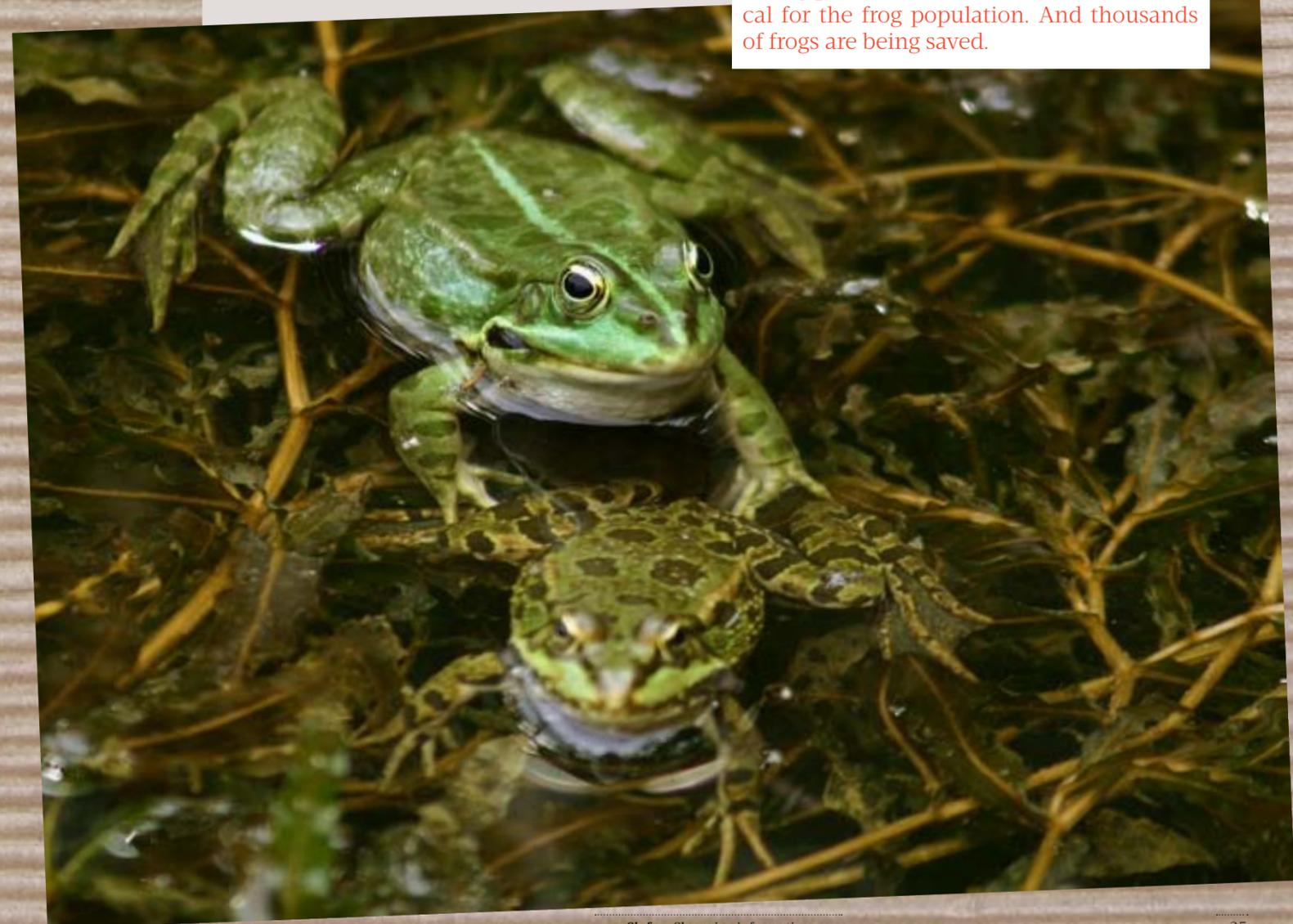
The Radensko Polje landscape park uses this campaign to gather as much information on the population number and species in this area as possible. It also aspires to have amphibian tunnels and permanent fences at the critical section of the regional road.

In recent years, the park has managed to find enough volunteers for the campaign, which will presumably end in the middle of April. This is also due to different workshops and raising the awareness of the local people. Carrying frogs is also an excellent opportunity for the volunteers to learn about different amphibian species and their issues. What is the volunteers’ job? They have to pick up the amphibians, put them in buckets and carry them across the road, where they can head towards their breeding site. Volunteers require a reflective vest, flashlight, bucket and gloves (optional).



This year, with the help of volunteers and volunteer firemen, a kilometre of fence was put up for amphibians, while buckets were buried along the road for them to fall into. The volunteers are checking the buckets twice a day (in the morning and in the evening) and carrying animals across the road. At the same time, they are documenting their number and all the species.

Be prepared to see special warning signs about frogs on the road anywhere across Slovenia; Radensko Polje is not the only place with such a campaign. There are more taking place all over Slovenia in areas critical for the frog population. And thousands of frogs are being saved.





Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

Dubravka Tomšič

The Piano is her Love

Some 65-odd years ago, she gave her first piano recital as a tiny little girl. She was a prodigy. That was the start of the extraordinary career of our indisputable first lady of music – pianist Dubravka Tomšič. It seems astonishing that she is still playing with such ease and that she continues to thrill music lovers all over the world. She would not have chosen any other path; she is in love with her profession and with music.

I paid a visit to Dubravka Tomšič-Srebotnjak at her home in Ljubljana, between her engagements at the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Music, where she is a full Professor of piano, and her preparations for a concert tour in the United States. A room with a view over Ljubljana city centre houses a Steinway piano. “Are you still so active?” I asked. “I am trying to stay in good performance shape but I am not as active as I used to be. I no longer

practice every day, except before concerts and tours,” she explained. It seems almost unbelievable that her career has been so long. “I might not sit at the piano for a month and then, in a day or two I’m back in shape,” she said.

During our pleasant talk, she told me that it was during the difficult times of the Second World War that by chance a piano came into her parents’ home. Even then,

she could not be parted from it, and she remembers that something was drawing her to that piano all the time. She does not come from a musical family. Her mother was very fond of music but was rather an amateur. She was, nevertheless, always keen to play the piano. Her father also had no professional involvement with music either; he was a distinguished professor of international law. But it was not long before the tiny girl’s ample talent was made

obvious. She started to take piano lessons at a tender age of four, in Ljubljana, under professor Zora Zarnik, who did not otherwise teach children. She studied there until she went abroad. At first, she also played the violin, but, since she was delicate and frail, doctors advised against her playing two musical instruments. To the great disappointment of her violin teachers, she chose piano, which, she remembers, was at that time her first and greatest love. She also wanted to become a ballet dancer, but lacked the necessary predispositions. After all, there was always the piano there.

An incredible story

Dubravka Tomšič has an incredible biography that resembles a scenario in which many different stories intertwine. Her professional career has been marked by success. She only smiles when I mention this and adds that she has been encouraged to document her experiences in memoirs. “It is true, there have been numerous stories, starting at the time of my studies, and continuing through the tours, and journeys...I have really experienced

“The larger the concert hall, the bigger the joy of performing.”

a lot. But I am not on friendly terms with writing,” she adds, laughing.

She still enjoys performing, as she always has. She has never experienced stage fright. She gave her first recital at age of five, finished music conservatory at nine, entered the Music Academy in Ljubljana, and then left for New York where she overwhelmed the musical world with her playing. She graduated from the Juilliard School, New York at seventeen, and could have graduated earlier had it not been for the need to finish her baccalaureate: first, she had to finish High School to be able to graduate from the Juilliard.

Arthur Rubinstein, with whom she studied for two years, was impressed by her talent. By then, her “dangerous years” were over. She gave a solo recital in the

famous Carnegie Hall, followed by performances at concert stages of world-renowned halls, numerous recitals and guest performances with many major world orchestras. “I played on prestigious subscription concerts where I gave recitals and performed with orchestras in Europe, Australia, United States, Russia, Canada, Mexico... I gave more than 4,000 concerts, and this figure does not include my minor performances.”

She has not skipped a concert season in her career: “Mostly, my health is good, which is very important for a pianist. Occasionally, I played with a fever because I did not want to let my audience down. I once cancelled my Russian tour. That was when my father died. When I gave birth to my son, I was absent from the stage for ten months in total. I performed in Canada

At fifteen, she was named the musical talent of the year and was rewarded with a performance with the New York Philharmonic.



when I was five months pregnant.” When she had a baby, everything was more difficult. She tried to schedule her concerts as close together as possible to spend more time at home. “These things are difficult for a mother,” she says.

She has always been a concert pianist. This was a more difficult way, but that was a challenge for her. There must be many stories connected with the years of performing... “But of course,” she remembers. “At the beginning, it was very difficult for a person like me, coming from Yugoslavia, to break the ice. Applause was polite, particularly in Germany. But at the end the concert the audience went raving mad and forgot where I came from. This happened in Munich.” There was a similar episode in Berlin. And something even more powerful happened in St Petersburg.

“The applause was so enthusiastic that I played 17 encores. I simply could not play any longer and just closed the piano,” she remembers, laughing.

One of the stories is associated with her performance at the Aspen Music Festival. “When I finished my performance, the audience clapped and stamped not only their feet but chairs. I did not know what was going on, I thought it was an earthquake. These are truly astonishing memories.”

It is the interpretation that warms up the audience and makes them forget where an artist comes from. Music becomes a tie between a performer and the audience.

“That is a sort of fluid that one can never feel by listening to the recording. Unfortunately, you can only experience it in live performance,” we agree. Tomšič remembers her first performance in Australia well. People queued throughout the night for ticket returns.

She greatly enjoys playing, performing and collaborating with orchestras. “Collaboration and rehearsal with good conductors and orchestras offers exceptional experiences. Cooperation between musicians is vital here, while in preparations for a recital, I only depend on myself. How an orchestra and a soloist are attuned depends on a conductor...I have worked with great conductors like Kurt Sanderling, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, Hans Graf, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Carlos de Prieto...I have worked with numerous conductors, young and old. I had a close and fruitful collaboration with Anton Nanut.”

She teaches at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana and much of her work is devoted to young talents. She is convinced that there are many talented young people and good pianists in Slovenia. Talent alone is not enough, she says, though there is a common idea that one must be exceptional. It is true, talent is imperative. But talent alone does not suffice: “You must be devoted, love your instrument, and above all, you must work very hard. Some people excel in the first, others in the second. Of course, we are trying to guide students in this direction.” She is always there for her students when they need consultations and assistance, and is very fond of her work.

Both she and her husband Alojz Srebotnjak, who was a composer, taught. Leading music universities and academies around the world offered posts to the two of them, but they decided to stay in Ljubljana,

where they were content. Their son is a little different from the rest of this musical family; his career started with success in the computer industry, and today, he is a film director and assistant professor at the Academy of Theatre, Film, Radio and Television in Ljubljana.

A vast opus

In addition to her numerous public appearances, Dubravka Tomšič has created an extensive discography, and has recorded for major radio and television stations throughout the world. She has released more than 90 CDs recorded at various publishers since 1987.

I am curious whether she has any favourite music. “Certainly,” she replies: “Classicism, romanticism, and also the music of the 20th century. I am not so much inclined to play the most recent musical scores. Others should play them. When I was a little girl, I only wanted to play Bach, Mozart, and, later, Beethoven. Then came romanticism with Chopin, after that, impressionism with Debussy, later Prokofiev, and my development continued. But then you focus on a narrower selection. When you get older, you play more for your heart’s content.” Her solo repertoire is very wide and diverse, and she had also in her repertoire 40 Concertos for Piano and Orchestra. Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak is full of plans. In the last month, she has given recitals throughout Slovenia. In April, she will start a concert tour of the United States. And she will continue her work with students at the University.

Her performance may seem unpretentious, but it is always technically commanding: “After all, music is simple. It is difficult to compose a work, but at the end it all sounds so simple.”

The critics’ word:

»...heroic power and Olympian vision...« (Los Angeles Times)

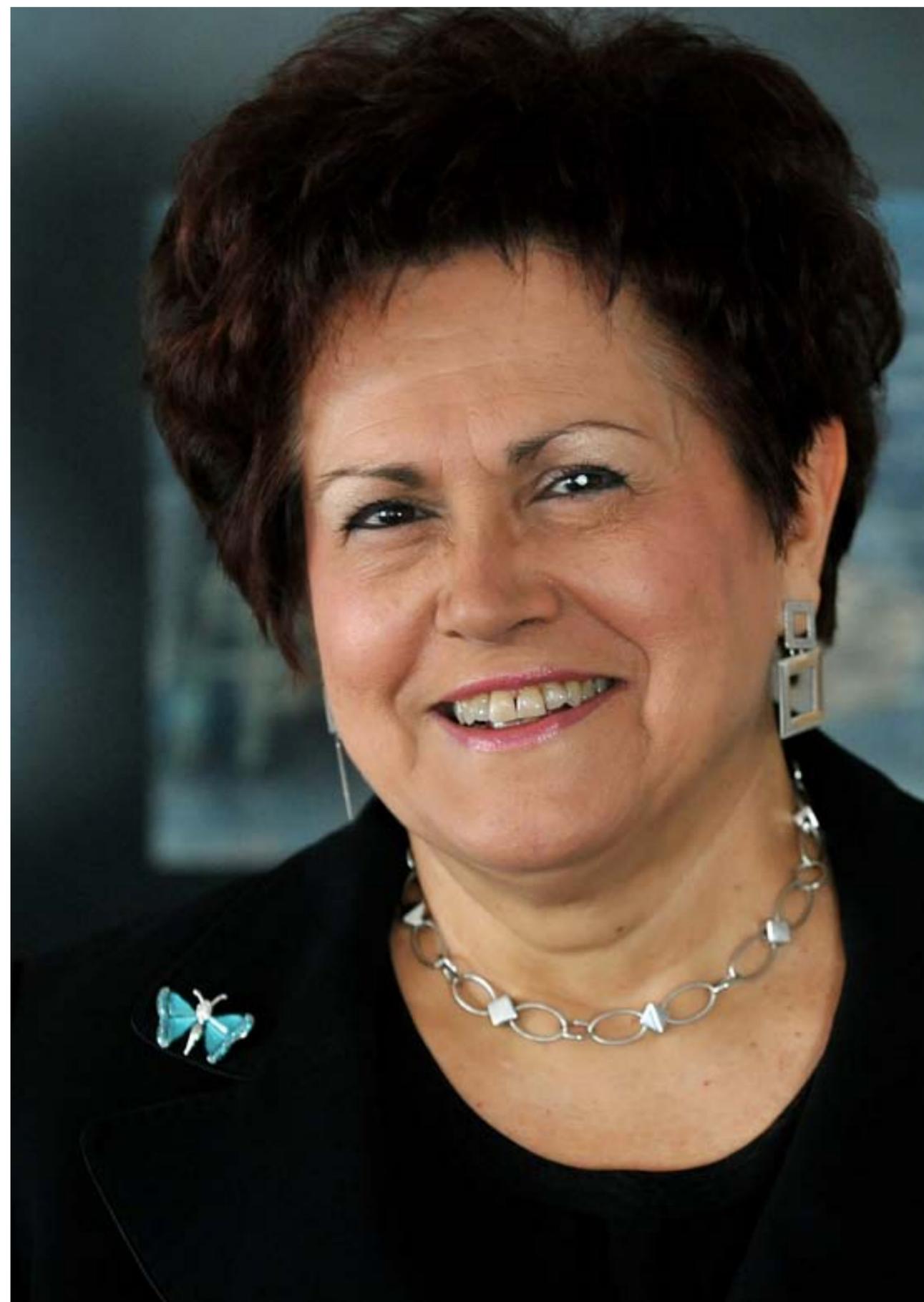
»...splendour, drama, passion, poetry, and subtlety...« (The Boston Globe)

»The Slovenian pianist Dubravka Tomšič, who gave an extraordinary recital at Alice Tully Hall.« (The New York Times)

»Pianist of power and vitality.« (The Daily Telegraph)

»Every note is full of life. There is an ideal balance between the right and left hand, and every phrase has its natural beginning, its natural development and its natural ending. And it all seems wonderfully simple.« (Kurier)

»Dubravka Tomšič’s name will continue to be mentioned even when other piano recitals are no more than a humming in our ears.« (Süddeutsche Zeitung)



Andrej Stare, photo: STA

HIS MAJESTY THE VITRANC CUP

In the northwest corner of Slovenia, the idyllic village of Kranjska gora is surrounded by mighty mountains, among them Vitranc, which with its grand scale and famous ski slopes, has become a symbol of Slovenia and Slovenian sport. There are many ski runs on the 1638-metre mountain, while the slope is most famous for its slalom and giant slalom races.



The best skiers of the world have raced and won on the slopes of Vitranc, some placing themselves among legends, while some have never overcome the pitfalls of Vitranc. One such example is the Austrian ski legend Karl Schranz, who has never succeeded in winning the Vitranc Cup.

The first Vitranc Cup was held on 4 March 1961, long before the Alpine Skiing World Cup began. Josef Stiegler from Austria was the first winner in giant slalom on the ski course later termed "Old FIS". This ski slope next to the road between Kranjska gora and Podkoren is now abandoned, with no skiers, but serves as a reminder of the pioneer days of Alpine skiing.

A 50-year anniversary of any sports competition is a tradition that deserves all respect and of which Slovenians are very proud. Along with the Vitranc Cup, Slovenia also organises the Golden Fox women's alpine skiing competition in the Pohorje and the traditional ski flying event in Planica.

The Vitranc Cup is one of the oldest competitions in Alpine skiing and, according to the FIS Calendar, has been a constant venue of the annual World Cup. In its 50-year history, the Vitranc Cup has been cancelled only 7 times due to bad weather

or a thaw. The Vitranc Cup was held twice in Adelboden (Switzerland) and once in Aspen (the USA); however, in the hearts of ski fans, it has the importance of the Lauberhorn Cup (Wengen), the Adelberg Cup – Kandahar (Garmisch) and the Hahnenkamm Cup (Kitzbühel).

Since its first race on the "Old FIS" course, and later on the modern "Podkoren" course, the Vitranc Cup has been visited by many dignitaries, including heads of state, royalty and other political leaders. The years 1986 and 1987 saw a record number of visitors, with approximately 40,000 spectators watching a slalom ski race. Slovenia has always been very proud of its Alpine skiing competitions, and the exceptional atmosphere, hospitality and easy accessibility have become a trademark of the Vitranc Cup.

Slovenian skiers also won the highest prizes on the Vitranc slope, and, with six individual victories, they rank as the most successful competitors in the 50-year history of the event. A special place among the Vitranc champions is held by Bojan Križaj, who won the slalom race three times (in 1980, 1982 and 1987) and the giant slalom once (in 1980). In 1980, he celebrated a double victory (in slalom and

giant slalom), which has been matched only by the Spaniard Francisco Fernandez Ochoa and the legendary Swede Ingemar Stenmark.

The greatest Vitranc hero is the Italian Alberto Tomba, one of the best Alpine skiers of modern times, who won the Vitranc Cup five times, while Bojan Križaj won four times, and Marc Girardelli (Luxembourg) and Benjamin Raich (Austria) three times.

An enjoyable atmosphere in Kranjska gora and along the Podkoren ski slope this year marked the 50th anniversary of the event. The spectators enjoyed watching the tricks of the best skiers, and the accompanying events have once again proven that Kranjska gora is one of the best and most hospitable World Cup event organisers.

The Vitranc Cup remains a source of national pride. In the years to come, the best Alpine skiers in the world will continue to reign over the Vitranc slope, as once did Jean-Claude Killy, Gustav Thoeni, Ingemar Stenmark, Phil Mahre, Alberto Tomba, Lasse Kjus, Benjamin Raich and Bode Miller.



PLANICA – CRADLE OF SLOVENIAN SPORT

The four-day World Cup Ski-Jumping Finals brought new joy and enthusiasm into the Planica valley. More than 50,000 spectators enjoyed the exceptional achievements of the ski jumpers, in particular the Austrians and also the excellent Slovenian "eagles".

Although, after 26 years, Planica has lost the primacy of the biggest jumping hill in the world with the new world record in sky flying set in February 2011 in Vikersund in Norway, Planica has continued its outstanding tradition of ski jumping. This discipline of ski jumping was born in Planica 86 years ago; since then, the Planica old ski-jump hill (known as "Bloudek's hill") and the new hill (since 1969, known as "Letalnica bratov Gorišek" [the Gorišek brothers' hill]) have hosted as many as 74 grand competitions. These competitions include competitions in ski jumping before the Second World War, competitions under the auspices of FIS-Ski (International Ski Federation), world cup competitions and six world cup finals in ski jumping (since 1972).

Planica has always had its heroes. These have included Sepp Bradl (Austria), Walter Steiner (Switzerland), Jiri Raška (Czech Republic), Wirkola Bjorn (Norway), Matti Nykanen (Finland), Martin Schmitt (Germany), Noriaki Kasai (Japan), Primož Ulaga (Slovenia), and, later, Matti Hautamaki (Finland), Bjorn Einar Romoeren (Norway), Adam Malysz (Poland) and the youngest among them, 21-year-old Gregor Schlierenzauer (Austria). The young Austrian has defeated all of the masters of ski flying and has already won four victories at the Planica giant hill, including this year also the first individual competition. The share of Slovenian ski jumpers was again large and visible. The Slovenian team (Jernej Damjan, Peter Prevc, Jurij Tepeš and Robert Kranjec) won third place, while Slovenia's champion Robert Kranjec excelled at the last competition in the season



and took second place.

This year's finale was also a farewell competition for one of the greatest ski jumpers of all times, Poland's Adam Malysz, who won third place in his last competition and also took third with total score in the world cup.

The Planica valley, situated close to the borders with Italy and Austria, will be even more beautiful and modern in the future. The Republic of Slovenia has established the Planica Sports Institute, which is entrusted with the renovation and building of a brand new Nordic Centre in Planica. This investment, which will create one of the most modern Nordic centres in the world, amounts to EUR 42.7 million.

It will contain seven jumping hills, a ski-flying hill, which will make jumps of more

than 250 m possible, and a cross-country skiing stadium with several tracks. The Nordic Centre will also feature a competition and recreation track, and as a particularly innovative feature, a 1.5-km long track in the hall, which will allow cross-country skiing 365 days a year. The main building of the Nordic Centre will have cutting-edge equipment for monitoring and training athletes, including a special wind tunnel. Space will be provided for a museum of Nordic skiing, with an exceptional location and exhibits. The stands along the cross-country stadium and ski-jumping hills will hold 30,000 spectators. Planica will present its candidature at FIS for organisation of the World Cup in Nordic Skiing in 2017, while in 2020 it will host the Ski-Flying World Championship.

Planica has always held a special place among the organisers of large competitions; ski-jumping competitions have achieved record numbers of spectators at all times (with the highest number of all in 1985 when almost 70,000 spectators watched ski jumping in one day); hospitality and authenticity have become an icon in the sport and confirmation of the Slovenian attitude towards Nordic Skiing. Each year, while saying goodbye, the Planica workers and spectators call out "See you again next year at our common holiday – ski jumping in Planica!"



Polona Prešeren, photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Žganci – always and forever

As children we were told: “Eat some more žganci and you’ll be big and strong!” So žganci was imprinted in our memory as a healthy food that gives us strength and energy, as food that people used to enjoy and still do. If you asked any Slovenian to name typical Slovenian food, I’m sure that žganci would be in the top five.



It is remarkable for a small country like Slovenia to have such culinary richness. Traditional home cooking is still very popular and young people enjoy Slovenian dishes, enjoy the taste of home-made food. Local inns have recently come to recognize this as a market niche, since people love to eat food that reminds them of home.

It seems unbelievable how dishes vary in different parts of Slovenia, although they are only a few tens of kilometres apart. Žganci is one of the dishes that can be found all over the country but is prepared differently in each region. The essence of žganci, however, stays the same. It is rich in energy giving carbohydrates. It is one of the essential ingredients of traditional cuisine that in its time corresponded to people’s possibilities and needs. Dishes were natural, prepared with only a little sugar or meat. They were based on mashes, vegetables and fruits, and contained valuable protective nutrients.

What is žganci?

In his book “Taste Slovenia”, which offers an exceptional overview of the Slovenian culinary tradition, ethnologist Janez Bogataj describes žganci as formerly the most widespread dish. In the 19th century, it was even called “the pillar of Carniola”, which shows its importance for the survival of a lot of people. Žganci wasn’t tied to a specific social class. It was eaten by the poor as well as the rich. It wasn’t tied to a specific meal either. It was served for breakfast, lunch or, although less often, supper. Leftovers were toasted with lard the following day.

Žganci is prepared from buckwheat, corn, wheat or barley flour, sometimes also from groats or potatoes. Wheat grits, cornmeal and potatoes can be added. It somewhat resembles polenta but is prepared with finely ground flour. Žganci are distinguished by the basic method of cooking or frying the flour: Carinthian, Upper Carniolan, Lower Carniolan and Lower Styrian. Žganci is a simple dish. Various types of flour (corn, buckwheat) are cooked in salted boiling water. Different ingredients can be added (such as potatoes). Even the side dishes served with žganci vary across Slovenia. Žganci goes well with all kinds of soup, from sour to vegetable soup, various stews, in some places even goulash. It also tastes good with sour milk, sauerkraut, turnip and yogurt.

The most widespread method of preparing žganci is the Upper Carniolan one. Pour flour into salted boiling water to form a lump. When the water is boiling, make a hole in the lump, so that the flour cooks as well. Cover the pot and let it simmer for about 40 minutes. Remove from the heat and strain off the boiling water, which is also called žgančevka. Save some of the water for later. Stir thoroughly and crumble. If the žganci appears too dry, add some žgančevka. Top with lard or cracklings, and the dish is ready for serving. I would like to add that although preparing žganci seems simple, the right ratio between the water and flour must be mastered. Don’t give up, even though you fail a couple of times.

White potato žganci and buckwheat žganci with potatoes are typical of Lower Carniola. The Lower Carniolan method consists of mixing a thick paste and grating it using a small narrow wooden board and a fork. Crumbled žganci can be served with cracklings,



sweet or sour milk, pickled turnip or cabbage. It can also be served with beef broth or stew.

In Carinthia, where žganci originates, this dish was prepared using a slightly different method. The flour is first toasted. Pour the flour into a pot without cooking oil, salt, onions or any other additions, and toast it on mild to medium heat. The heat mustn't be too strong or the pot too weak or the flour will stick to the walls and the bottom.

Take another pot and bring salted water to the boil. Let it simmer during preparation. Slowly start adding the water to the toasted flour using a ladle. The flour is toasted enough when it starts turning yellowish or brownish. It is harder to recognize the change of colour with buckwheat flour, so rely on your sense of smell. A few minutes after sensing the aroma, start adding the water and continuously stir. A warning again: it is not easy to determine the right amount of water. It is best to try and see whether you like your žganci wet or dry. If it appears too dry, add some more water. Sometimes a spoonful or a few drops is enough.

Great chefs reveal their tiny secrets

While preparing žganci, it is crucial to add the right amount of water. A lot of people will tell you that real žganci must be served with cracklings but that is a matter of taste. What side dishes žganci should be served with is also a matter of taste and culinary preference. It is also a seasonal matter. In the winter, žganci is eaten with sauerkraut, turnip and stews. In the summer, sour milk is more refreshing.

It is also important which flour is used. The best kind is ground in the traditional way with millstones, so that it remains wholegrain. The day after preparing the dish, pre-boiled and larded žganci is mixed with an egg. It is added to hot žganci and stirred until it coagulates. The egg white and egg yolk contribute fundamentally not just to the taste but also to the appearance of the žganci. Each housewife has her own secret recipe for preparing this dish. Žganci differ not only from region to region but also from town to town, and even from house to house. In the Prekmurje region, the most popular version of žganci is potato žganci, also known as dōdele, dōdōle, dōdōli and konopérni žgániki.

The Slovenian word žganci sounds sweet, different, even funny, and foreigners struggle with its pronunciation. The recipe for buckwheat žganci first appeared in German cookbooks in 1465, which proves that žganci really is an old dish. There are many sayings about žganci. If anybody ever says to you: "You'll have to eat a whole lot more žganci before you'll be able to do this," they are almost patronising you, saying that you'll have to get a lot older and stronger to achieve your goal. Another saying is "Sleep is better than žganci," meaning it is better to sleep than to eat. Traditional food is being kept alive and remains quite popular. Almost every holiday is celebrated with special dishes, as described in the old Lower Carniolan saying "A different cut for every holiday." However, any day is right for žganci! You know, to keep you strong.



BUCKWHEAT ŽGANCI (FOR CORN ŽGANCI USE CORN FLOUR)

1 kg of buckwheat flour
100 g of cooking oil
150 g of cracklings
salt

Boil 3 litres of salted water.

Pour the flour into the boiling water to form a lump. As the water quickly covers the lump and boils, lower the temperature. Make a 2–2.5 cm hole in the lump with the handle of a wooden spoon. Cover the pot and let it simmer for 40 minutes. Remove from heat. Strain off the žgančevka and save it for later. Stir the lump thoroughly. If the žganci appears too dry, add some of the decanted žgančevka. Scoop from the pot with a wooden spoon and crumble into a bigger bowl with a fork. Top with lard and cracklings, stir, cover and let it sit for a few minutes.

POTATO ŽGANCI

500 g of potatoes
1 small onion
400 g of flour
100 g of minced lard
1 spoonful of lard
1 decilitre of sour cream

Boil salted water for cooking the potatoes.

Peel, wash and cut the potatoes into cubes and put them into the salted boiling water. Boil for about 10 minutes, until the potatoes are half done. Pour in the sifted flour and quickly bring to the boil. As the water covers the flour, lower the temperature and make a hole in the flour with the handle of a wooden spoon. Let it simmer for 30 minutes. Put minced lard into a pan and let it dissolve over heat. Peel the onion and slice it thin. Dissolve the lard in the pan and stir-fry the sliced onion. Decant some žgančevka into a cup and add hot minced lard into the pot. Stir thoroughly. If the mix appears too dry, add some decanted water. Scoop the mix from the pot with a wooden spoon and crumble it into a bowl with a fork. Add some sour cream to the stir-fried onion, bring it to the boil and pour it over the žganci in a bowl.



Hana Souček Morača, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

The reign of the “Kurent”



Every year at the end of February, Slovenia is consumed with the joys of a holiday that chases away the winter and welcomes the spring through the dance of snowflakes and the Kurent, a traditional carnival figure. The traditional Shrovetide Carnival has established strong roots in our lands, and many masks have been preserved which have become recognisable hallmarks of the region or town from which they hail.

The Kurent is the most popular traditional carnival figure in the wider Ptuj region, with as many as 2,000 gathering each year for the celebration. According to popular belief, this conqueror of women's handkerchiefs and banisher of the cold chases winter away and rouses nature into budding spring life. Its origins are unknown, but similar figures can be found elsewhere in Europe. These mighty masks run through villages in packs and cause a commotion with the bells which are affixed to their waists.

The giant of Shrovetide

With its sheep skin coat, its mask featuring a long red tongue, its wooden club and big cow-bells, the Kurent is a mighty and mystical figure. Ptuj has two groups of Kurents: the feathery variety, which originates from Markovci on the left side of the Drava River, and the featherless horned type which reigns in the Haloze area on the right river bank. Although the Kurent has preserved its image, its costume (called “Kurentija”) has been developing throughout history. The single bell originally sported has now increased to five in number, and the costume's appearance has otherwise become more uniform. The quality of the fleece, however, has undergone the biggest change.

The tradition of costume-making

In times gone by, boys made the outfits by themselves and used everything at their disposal. Instead of sheep with special fleece, which is what is used nowadays, they would sew together anything hairy. In the evening hours, they would create their mystical figure in stables, and back then, the masks were very different. Even today, some of the carnival

groups make their outfits by themselves, but some order them from the very rare manufacturers. One of them is the expert Kurent outfit manufacturer, Marko Klinc, from Spuhlja near Ptuj. These manufacturers have an important role to play as they have a responsibility to hand down the tradition to the younger generations. Marko Klinc continues the family tradition of producing Kurent outfits, a trade he learned from his father. His father, like Marko, was an upholsterer, and his uncles were saddlers, but they were all proud Kurents. Marko Klinc Sr. was the first to start making outfits for other people and not just for himself, while nowadays the whole family is involved in this business. Marko Klinc says, “I've always poked my nose in his business, so to say, and I watched my father with great interest and learned from him”. It takes him around two days to make an outfit and he commences work after New Year, continuing until the end of the Carnival. He is himself a Kurent, which is why he makes the outfits and souvenirs with particular passion. He says, that they “put their soul into the Kurent” and adds that when you don the outfit, you become twice as strong. He points out that his outfits can be seen in every continent of the world and that he has travelled and seen large swathes of Europe as a Kurent.

How the figure of the Kurent comes alive

Marko Klinc produces the outfits according to orders placed by individuals, with a single outfit requiring between five to seven sheep skins, leather, goose or turkey feathers, cow horns and hedgehog skin. He buys the bells and the leggings elsewhere. “The preparation of the materials takes the most work, as these are all natural products.” He explains that the outfit makers look for special sheep with coloured locks in the fleece or Merino sheep as they need the fleece of live animals, so they do not always buy raw materials locally but in other locations around the Balkans. According to him, the start of the manufacturing process is the most difficult, namely the making of the hat or headdress. The base is made out of leather with openings for the eyes, nose and mouth. He proceeds to decorate the mask, attach the ears, affix the rye horns adorned with colourful ribbons which represent joy and new life, and finishes by decorating the hat with the nose. “Noses can differ, depending on the client's wishes.” The base is then covered in sheep





skin and a moustache is fastened under the nose, as is the decorated tongue made out of cloth. For the teeth, the maker uses white beans threaded on a string. The face of the Kurent is adorned by goose, duck or turkey feathers. But not every feather will do, mind you; feathers are a natural material and the fowl must therefore be of the right kind, namely a free-range fowl that grooms itself and not the farm-

grown ones." Every Kurent needs leggings, and these take the form of hand-knitted stockings which were once made out of the yarn taken from old sweaters. These days, they are mostly made in red or green, with decorative pom-poms. The colour of the leggings – which can take eight to ten hours to make – can symbolise marital status or territorial belonging. An indispensable part of the outfit is the

fur coat, which is stitched together using sheep skins which need to match up as well as possible. Winter cannot be chased away without the bells, which are affixed to the Kurent's waist. Five bells – they used to be inherited in the old days – are fixed to a chain. "The biggest one is on the back, while two smaller ones are on the hips, and the smallest of them all is positioned in the front. The three different sizes make three different kinds of sound." An important part of the outfit is the wooden "hedgehog" club, wrapped in leather, with hedgehog spines attached symbolising manhood; a Kurent must always carry this with him as there is no greater shame than if someone were to snatch it from him.

The whole outfit can weigh over 30 kilograms. Marko Klinc uses up to 15 skins and a pair of feathers, "from one goose for one feathery Kurent and a pair of horns for the horned Kurent". Kurents differ from one another in terms of skin and colour, as every outfit is unique.

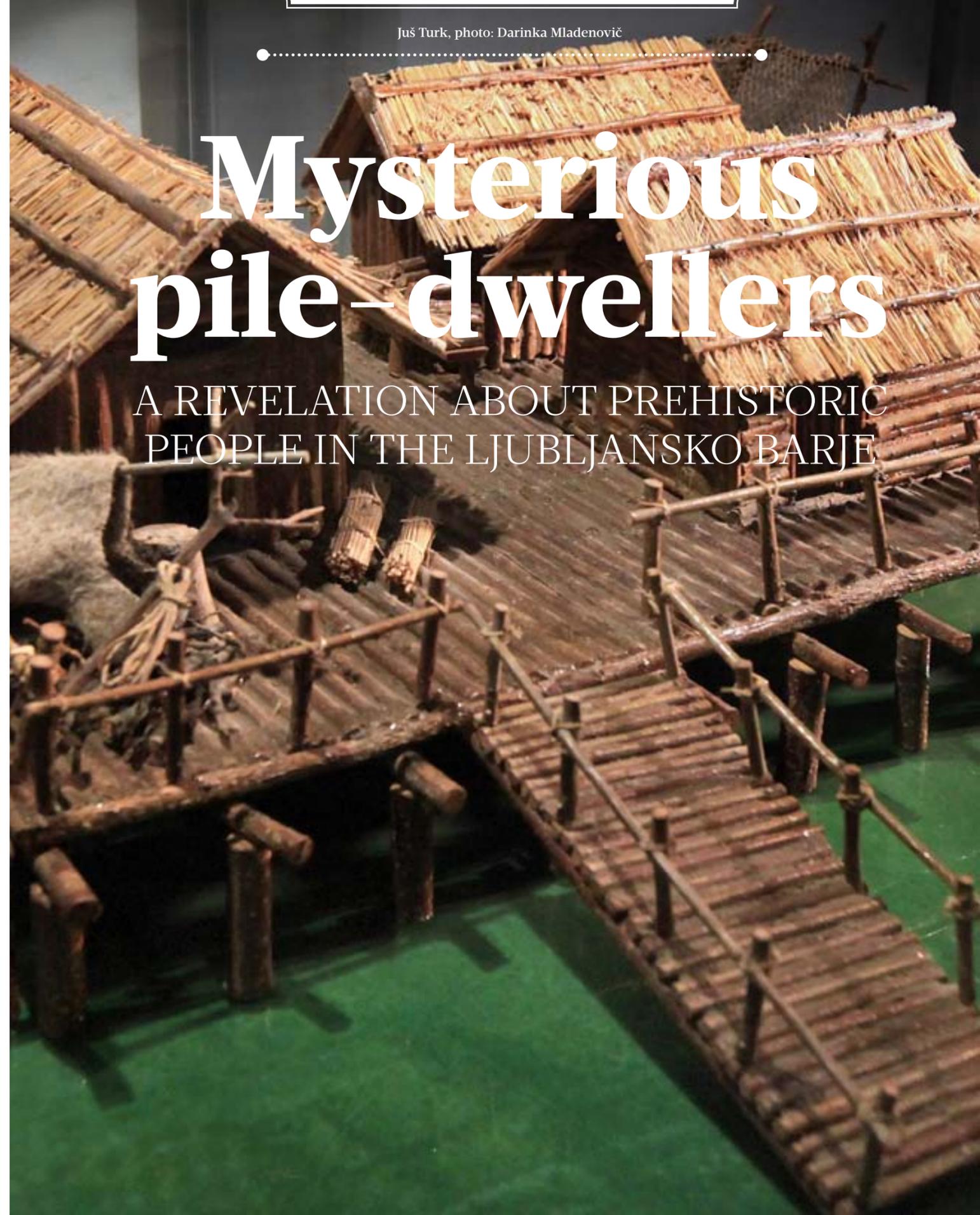
If you would like to join our band of winter-chasers, you do not need to meet any criteria. Your age is no obstacle and neither is your gender or marital status. All that is needed to usher in the spring is a merry disposition, a fur coat and a pair of bells. If, however, you want to make a Kurent happy, than give it your handkerchief as they are not allowed to accept any other gifts. "The most likeable and best looking Kurent gets the most handkerchiefs", says Klinc and adds that, in these modern times, one can sometimes see a bra springing up on the hedgehog club. As well as handkerchiefs, the horned Kurent finds it difficult to resist sausages, not to mention the region's home grown wine.



Juš Turk, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

Mysterious pile-dwellers

A REVELATION ABOUT PREHISTORIC PEOPLE IN THE LJUBLJANSKO BARJE





While pharaohs commissioned the building of huge pyramids for their afterlife and ruthlessly exploited their people to this end, some European tribes were much wiser. They are called pile-dwellers or lake-dwellers and in Slovenian *koliščarji*, *mostiščarji* or *jezerci*. For centuries, pile-dwellers inhabited the largest marshes in Slovenia, which are today termed the *Ljubljansko barje*. The first pile-dwellings were erected there as early as the first half of the fifth century BC. By the middle of the second century, the lake had turned into marshes and moors, which signalled the end of pile-dwelling construction.

Dr Anton Velušček,

an archaeologist from the Institute of Archaeology, Scientific Research Centre of the Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana, and an acknowledged expert who has been researching the history of life in the *Ljubljansko barje* for more than 15 years, believes that, 6,600 years ago, the first pile-dwellers inhabited the marshes for less than ten years. This was followed by intermittent periods of settlement in the area. They lived in groups of five or seven in wood houses with a surface area of 20 to 30 square metres. The houses were raised on wooden piles hammered into the lake bed, which is similar to the practice of modern people living in the *Ljubljansko barje*, the only difference being that the houses are not now elevated and modern piles have replaced the wood.

Discovery of the oldest wheel in the world

The oldest archaeological remains in the *Ljubljansko barje* date back to the Middle Palaeolithic or ice period. There are finds

of Hallstatt and La Tène origin. Wood traps with metal frames found in deep peat in the south and east of the marshes tell stories of hunting in those ancient times. The *Ljubljanica* runs through this area and has always been useful for navigation, although the height difference between *Vrhnika* and *Ljubljana* is no more than a metre. The port of *Nauportus*, situated in present-day *Vrhnika*, flourished in Roman times and has yielded interesting clay vessels and numerous weapons. This is also manifested in the famous find of a Roman barge, unearthed in 1890 at one of the properties in the *Ljubljansko barje*. It had a flat bottom suitable for shallow rivers. An even more exciting discovery followed in April 2002 when Slovenian archaeologists found the remains of a two-wheel wood cart of between 5,350 and 5,100 years old. This is the oldest



wheel ever found in Europe or the world. This area was settled by the Slavs in the sixth century, as shown by finds of typical clay vessels with a recognisable ornamental wavy line and a pottery sign at the bottom of the jug. Most of the weapons found by the archaeologists in this area can be traced back to the eighth and ninth centuries, when Franks marched against Avars and Hungarian insurgents.

A permanent exhibition of pile-dwellers has recently been opened near Ljubljana

The first pile-dwelling in the *Ljubljansko barje* was discovered in 1875 and today there are around 40 known locations of pile-dwellings. A year does not go by



without a find from the period of the pile-dwellings in the *Ljubljansko barje*. Since their culture is interesting and the sites are very close to the capital of present-day Slovenia (*Ljubljana*), the Slovenian authorities have for some time been considering an initiative from experts to set up a replica of a pile-dweller's house as a tourist attraction. But the residents of *Ig* in the south of the *Ljubljansko barje* have beaten them to it by opening a permanent exhibition of not only a replica of the house but also artistic illustrations conveying the typical "lacustrine" way of life. According to Dr Velušček, discussions with representatives of *Ig* – near to where the first dwellings were discovered – have been ongoing for several years with the objective of establishing an open-air museum of pile-dwellings. Until now, the dwellings were presented only in museums, such as the National Museum of Slovenia in *Ljubljana*.

Holding a prehistoric vessel in your own hands is an experience

The lake covering the present territory of the *Ljubljansko barje* vanished in the middle of the second century BC and with it the pile-dwellers. An uninformed visitor would not notice that this is the site of prehistoric pile-dwellings. For archaeologists, the site is an inexhaustible source of information because even the organic remains of tree trunks and seeds are preserved in the humid air of the marshes. Plant material tells us much about vegetation and life in those times. Examining these and other remains, archaeologists have established that pile-dwellers in the

"Well, at first the Swiss also believed that pile-dwellers were Celtic people, but later they established that they were significantly older. Perhaps Indo-European, but we are not certain. It seems that they probably came to Europe from the east."

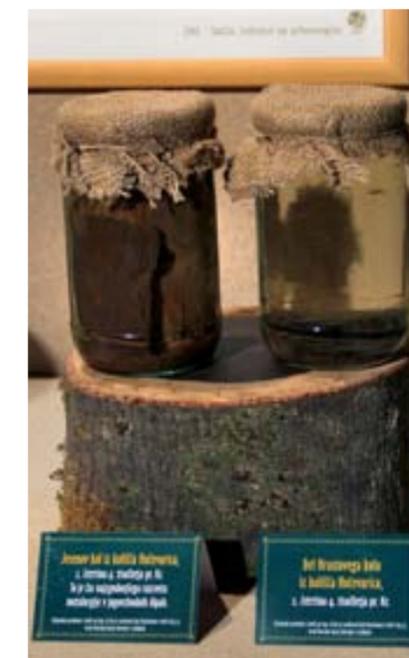
What is in your opinion most characteristic of the pile-dwellers in the Ljubljansko barje compared with others? Is it the remnant of the oldest wheel found in the world?

"Definitely. Their beautiful pottery made of baked clay is also very interesting; some pieces are about 4,500 years old, which makes them nearly as old as the ancient Egyptian pyramids."

In your book, I could not find any mention of musical instruments used by pile-dwellers. Has anyone in the Ljubljansko barje found a flute similar to that discovered in the cave in Divje babe near Idrija, which is believed to be the oldest musical instrument ever found?

"Of course, we know that they played on musical instruments because some were excavated."

In conclusion, Slovenian authorities are endeavouring to preserve one of the two most beautiful natural sites in Slovenia, the *Ljubljansko barje* as it is today: a wetland with no buildings, rich in diverse original flora and fauna – so that, for example, rare bird species may continue to nest there, including species hardly found elsewhere in the world. This is another reason why the *Ljubljansko barje* was proclaimed a Landscape Park by the government.



Ljubljansko barje were also farmers. Their fields were on dry, firm ground at a small distance from the dwellings, they certainly also picked wild forest fruits and raised cattle, sheep, goats and pigs, but hunting and fishing were their most important activities. Clay and ceramic vessels are among their products. It is awe-inspiring when Dr Velušček places a shard of this vessel into your hand saying that it is several thousand years old. Within the *Ljubljansko barje*, archaeologists also found objects made of copper testifying that the pile-dwellers began to explore the metallurgy of copper in the fourth century BC. For transportation on the lake they made oak dugouts, and in the second half of the fourth century they used carts to travel outside the *Ljubljansko barje*. In short, pile-dwellers were highly innovative and capable of adapting very successfully to the environment. This is presented to lay readers in a book by Dr Velušček with photographs and illustrations by Tamara Korošec.

Is it true that pile-dwellers did not settle only in the Ljubljansko barje but inhabited other lakes around the world as well?

"Yes, of course, in Greece, Germany, Austria, Italy, France and Switzerland. The Swiss have the largest collection of data on pile-dwellers and are also making the most effort to include pile-dwellings on the UNESCO list. This project is well on track to achieving its goal, for which the credit goes to the Swiss, and it seems that they will soon implement it successfully. It is important that Slovenia joins them with its pile-dwellings."

To which tribe did the pile-dwellers belong? The Celts maybe?

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**