

sinfo

September-October

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS

The written word enriches us

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

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Photo: Bruno Toič

HOMAGE TO BOOKS

Nearly half a million Slovenians have a library card. The Slovenia is for sure a knowledge-hungry nation, and one that values books. And for this reason we have Trubar Day, which has been a Slovenian national holiday since 2010. It is held in memory of Primož Trubar, the father of Slovenian literature, founder of Slovenian as a literary language, and the central figure of Slovenian Protestantism. This day calls out to us especially with its question as to the role of books in the history of the Slovenian language, and the desire for knowledge as the foundation for shaping the Slovenian nation. And now Slovenians will have Dalmatin's version of the New Testament in modern language, as published by the Trubar Forum Association.

The National Programme for Culture 2014–2017 sets as one of its fundamental goals in the area of books the project "Slovenia – guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair," Slovenia is contending to be the guest of honour at the fair in 2021. This goal is important primarily to gain wider recognition for Slovenian creativity, and for its cultural, economic and other potentials. For we Slovenians have earned it.

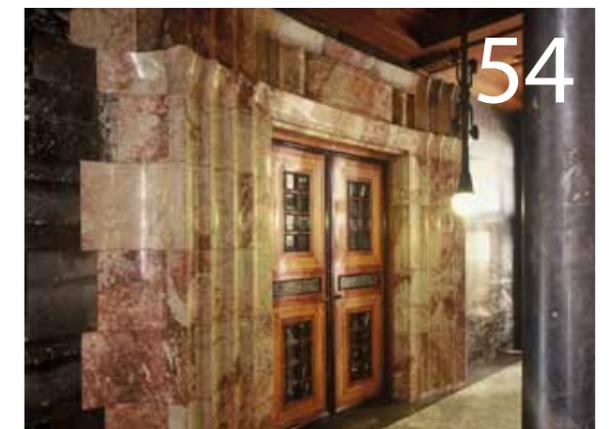
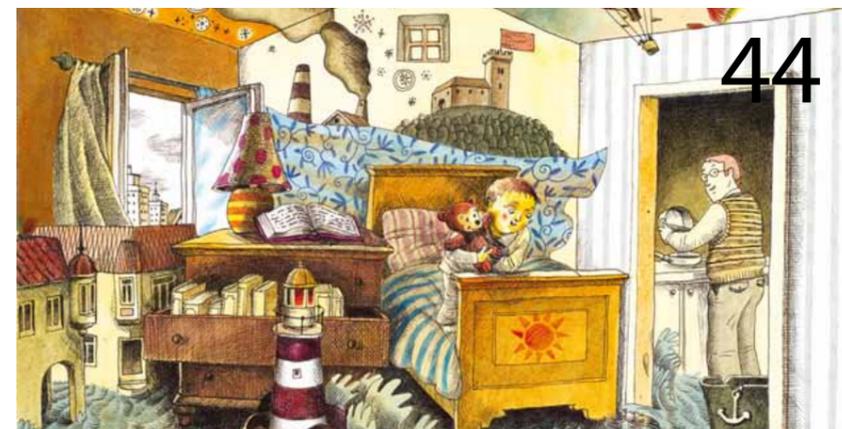
In this issue of Sinfo magazine we showcase medieval literary illustration, take a stroll with architect Jože Plečnik through Slovenia's National and University Library, and present the best of current Slovenian writers working in varying genres, along with foreign writers who have found inspiration for their best works in the natural beauty and historical events of the Slovenian lands. We Slovenians have a great soul, and this is perhaps no wonder, since we are located in such a beautiful natural environment. Foreign eyes have noticed this, too. And as they marvel and admire this, they are also reporting it to the world.

Words are the finest, not just the strongest, tools. Even if the eyes do not see, the essential thing is that the soul resonates with the idea. Enjoy Slovenian literature, thought and wisdom.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Tanja Glogovčan".

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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The handles to the main entrance doors of the National University Library are in the form of horses' heads that mimic Pegasus, the mythological winged horse which in this case symbolises a guide for library visitors into the world of knowledge.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

THE WRITTEN WORD ENRICHES US

Each artistic work carries within itself a certain message. If we understand it, we value it and also enjoy it. The book, reading, text, author and concept must captivate us. The path to knowledge is not self-evident. It is the path to wisdom, with the requirement of a pure heart and thoughts.

THE SLOVENIAN LITERARY GARDEN

A new concept for the Slovenian Collective Stand at International Book Fairs

RENATA ZAMIDA
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



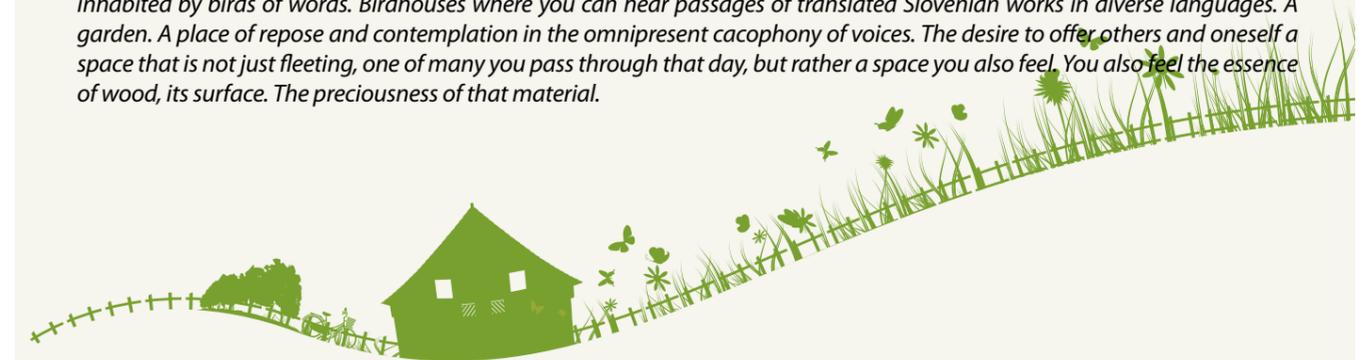
Lucija Stupica is a creator of a new visual appearance for the Slovenian national stand at book fairs where the Slovenian Book Agency participates.

Slovenian Book Agency asked the architect and poet Lucija Stupica for a conceptual record of her thinking around the creation of a new visual appearance for the Slovenian national stand at book fairs where the Slovenian Book Agency participates. Visit our literary garden – in Frankfurt, Leipzig and Bologna ... you will find more than books. Official opening: Frankfurt Book Fair, Hall 5, C103, Wednesday, October 11 at 1 p.m. Save the date.

Stupica (1971) is a poet and interior designer. Her first book of poetry, *Čelo na soncu* (*Forehead in the Sun*, 2000), was awarded two national prizes.

Since then she has published two more critically acclaimed books of poetry, *Vetrolov* (*Windcatcher*; 2004) and *Otok, mesto in drugi* (*The Island, the City and the Others*; 2008), leading up to her being awarded the prestigious German Hubert Burda Prize for young Eastern European poets. She currently resides in Sweden, where she was awarded the Klas de Vylder scholarship for best writer born outside of the country. Her poetry has been translated into more than fifteen languages worldwide.

A garden. Or forest glade. Trees. The rustling of leaves, pages of books turning over under the fingers of visitors. Birdhouses inhabited by birds of words. Birdhouses where you can hear passages of translated Slovenian works in diverse languages. A garden. A place of repose and contemplation in the omnipresent cacophony of voices. The desire to offer others and oneself a space that is not just fleeting, one of many you pass through that day, but rather a space you also feel. You also feel the essence of wood, its surface. The preciousness of that material.



“As a poet and designer of space, carrying within myself a love of books, a love of language and also of nature, the greatest challenge in design has been how to open up the senses that accompany a stroll through books, a stroll through the forest, the forest of words, how to awaken the polyphony of senses when a visitor stops at one of the five trees and lets their gaze slide along the shelves with titles of children’s literature, award-winning authors or literature in translation, when they open a book and read a few lines. All these tiny images that fill hundreds of pages of books and then us who read. Designing a stand which I, as a poet, would like to visit, that was my greatest desire. And in choosing among all the possible approaches and possibilities, opting for one where, as the great Polish poet says, I could say: “I prefer to knock on wood. I prefer not to ask how much longer and when. I prefer keeping in mind even the possibility that existence has its own reason for being.” (Wisława Szymborska, from Nothing Twice (1997), translated by Baranczak & Cavanagh). Even just for a fraction of a second, so I can justify the existence of the design of this stand.

It is no coincidence that the thinking that helped guide the design of the new stand for the Frankfurt Book Fair also led to the originators of two new creative collectives, Oloop and Smetumet. Common to them is a connectivity, environmental thinking and operating, and sensitive social topics are the cornerstone of their creativity.”

(by Lucija Stupica)



Oloop is managed by three designers, artists and producers, Katja Burger, Tjaša Bavcon and Jasminka Ferček. They are active in various fields of visual creation, from product design and spatial installation design to textile art. In this they are sensitive to vulnerable groups, which they demonstrate most in their latest project, called Revealed Hands. The hand-crocheted pillows, made by immigrants in Jesenice, were one of the reasons for cooperation. As part of the project of the new Slovenian Book Agency stand the designers are presenting seven large-dimension seat cushions.



Smetumet comprises Maja Rijavec and Alenka Kreč Bricelj. They both love and are never put off by reusing, recycling and creating items out of waste materials. You could call it garbage, or useless junk in our houses. In their hands the reworked things take on a new mission. They drew our attention with the product O Beautiful Pendant, as they call recycled old paper in the form of a croissant with meadow flower seeds. Since the stand has a garden and bird houses and meadow flowers in the form of seeds are something you can take home and plant, sometimes recalling that space full of Slovenian books and words, or better, you can open a Slovenian book in the original or translation and immerse yourself in it. And there is a fragrance all around you. Or perhaps you will put the seeds in the birdhouses, in case any birds actually stop by.

One of the first thoughts on creating a new exhibition space was a dedicated chair. It is hard not to think about a chair when you think about books. For both writers and readers. And since in the modern age the last word in Slovenian chairs was created by the great Slovenian industrial designer Niko Kralj (1920-2013), we once again delved into recycling – of ideas and materials. The architect Primož Jeza designed a chair for the company Donar called the **Nico Less**, made of 100% recycled felt, which won an international Red Dot Prize in 2016 for product design, and is a homage to Kralj’s Lupina chair.



READERS FINALLY SAVOUR A NEW NOVEL BY DRAGO JANČAR

“...love conquers any distance, love conquers all. Except war.”

ZORA A. JURIČ



Drago Jančar
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Drago Jančar (born 1948), writer, playwright and essayist, is one of the most esteemed, widely read and translated Slovene writers. He has received notable Slovene and international awards for his works, among them the Herder Prize, the Premio Hemingway in Italy, and the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book Prize) in France for his novel *To noč sem jo videl* (I Saw Her That Night).

This spring we saw the publication of Jančar's eleventh novel, *And Love Itself*, long awaited among literary connoisseurs and other fans of his writing. Months after its publication it is still receiving strong acclaim from critics and readers alike.

The novel is already being translated into German (Paul Zsolnay/Hanser) and French (Phébus) and it instantly became a bestseller in Slovenian.

Your newest novel, *And Love Itself*, is set during the Second World War. History seems to have always excited you. You are interested in, as you have said, “what happens when fragile human destiny starts being ground in the millstones of history.” Is it simply a case of observing people, relationships, questioning human nature? Is this more pronounced in borderline situations?

Certainly, war changes everything, people become different, immensely scared and sometimes also extraordinarily brave. And all relationships are formed anew. Some draw strength from the massive engine of collective willpower, others from individual, often emotional reasons. I knew people who were in Gestapo prisons, who joined the partisans, who committed terrible acts after the war, things you could never attribute to them in normal times. It is not, however, merely a case of observation; the novel is a form which can become a living organism – the background of the true story becomes a platform for the imagination, inter-human plots, passion, love, malevolence and brave acts, life.

Although the title of the novel, *And Love Itself* points to this being a love story, the context attests that it is also and essentially a question of evil. The story happens at a time when hatred and violence prevail in the world. and when the destinies of the oppressors and the victims intertwine. It often comes down to the so-called banality of evil ... When and why does a person step over that blurred line?

A hard question, and in a way this is the very question the novel tries to answer. Many of those with good intentions and who act in accordance with their beliefs, cross it without knowing themselves when exactly this happens. In the circumstances created by the brutal occupation of the town, this line, which was also the line between life and death, was very thin.

At one moment big words, songs, music, the next moment killings. A spiral of evil. Somewhere deep down, however, attempts at love still kindle, despite there being little space for pity left.

When, in my childhood and youth, I listened to stories about the war, there was no pity in them, just real facts and strong emotions – crime and punishment, betrayal and revenge.

You have once more set your novel in Maribor, and have interestingly linked it with your 1984 novel *Northern Lights* in a passage that connects the past with a glance into the future. Namely, as the protagonist, Sonia Belak, waits in a bookshop



Jančar has received a number of literary awards, including the Prešeren Award, Slovenia's most prestigious arts award in 1993 for his narratives, plays and essays; the Kresnik Award for best novel of the year in 1999 for *Zvenenje v glavi* (Ringing in a Head), 2001 for *Katarina, pav in jezuit* (Catherine, Peacock and Jesuit) and 2011 for *To noč sem jo videl* (I Saw Her That Night); the European Short Story Award (Augsburg, 1994); the Herder Prize for Literature in 2003; the European Prize for Literature in 2011. Since 1995, he has been a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

At the Kresnik award ceremony in 2011.
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

for the young author of the novel *Northern Lights*, she comes across Byron's poem, a verse of which gives the new novel its title. At any rate, your omniscient narrator who can also see into the future is very interesting. Is this an innovation which allows you to freely pass through time and through the story?

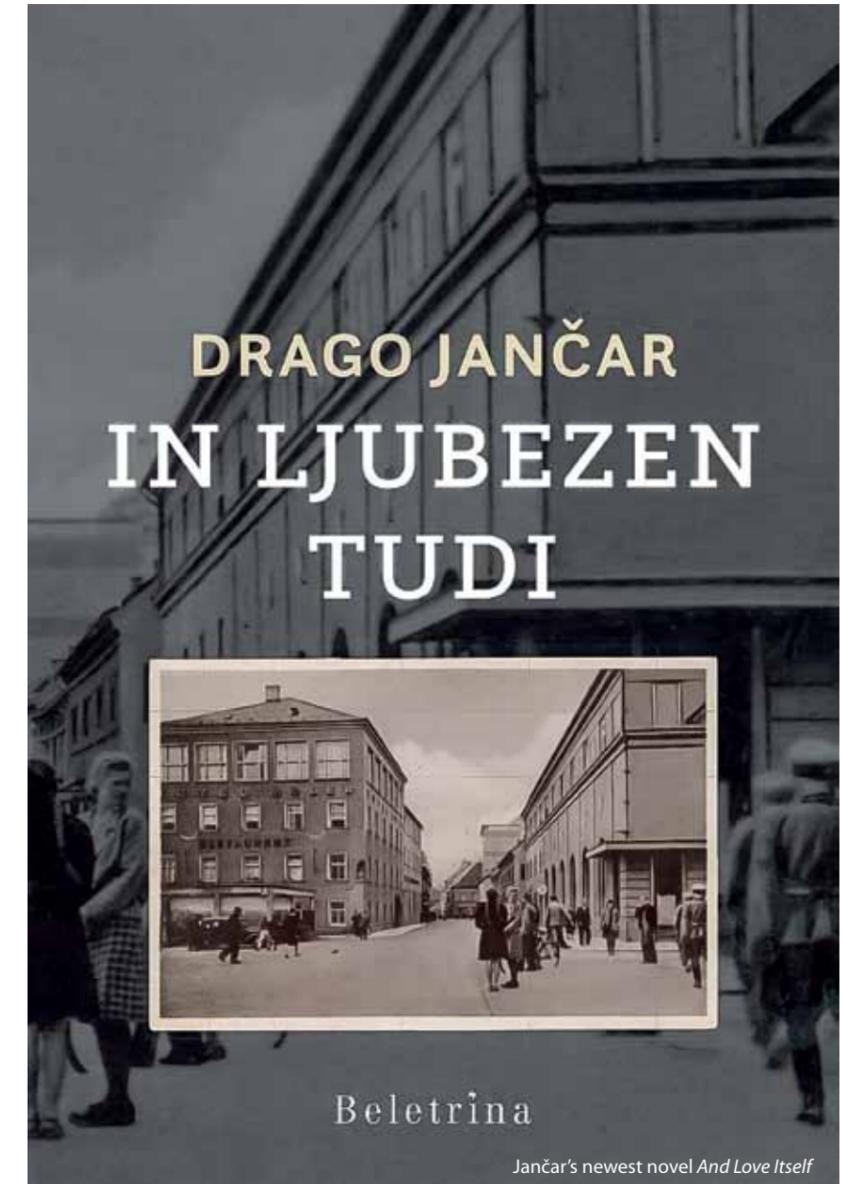
It is interesting what a strong effect these brief excursions of individual protagonists into the future have had on readers. When I wrote it, I was not aware of this.

After the protagonists survive terrible events, become entangled in evil acts or become victims of these, they still have to live on with all this.

And in some dark melancholy I saw how they live, how they would live. Bright flares of love covered in a veil of the past shine through cracks in dark memories.

The novel begins with a masterly opening move - we enter a photograph (the very one on the front cover) as if we are entering a film, and it suddenly comes to life. How is it with these openings - are they known at the earliest stages of the process, or do they come as you write?

When, by chance, I came across an old postcard of an almost idyllic Maribor street, I initially tried to figure out whether it was from the Austro-Hungarian period; two girls chatting and a few other people hurrying about their business. It was only after a while that I noticed a man in an SS uniform in the right corner. A dramatic tension surged from the idyll in the photograph; of course, this was wartime. I instantly knew that this was the trigger, the start of a novel. As I said, I had had the concept inside me for some time. At that moment, however, I found the key that opened it all up, allowing it to flow into a story of love, violence, killing - and survival. Life wins, even if *love itself* must have rest.



KRESNIK AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL 2017

The Fig was the sweetest

MANCA G. RENKO



The Kresnik is the most prestigious Slovenian literary prize, created in 1991 – the year of Slovenia's independence – through an initiative of the main newspaper *Delo*, which still sponsors the prize.

The best novel of the past year is decided upon by a jury of experts, and the prize is awarded each year on Rožnik Hill in Ljubljana, by the inn once lived in by one of the most important Slovenian writers, Ivan Cankar. It takes place on the eve of Slovenia's bonfire night, 23 June, but for months before this people's minds are fired up about which might be the winning work. The Kresnik (from the Slovenian for 'bonfire') is not just a cash prize; possibly more important is the recognition which comes with it, and which has a big impression on the general public. It is well-known that novels awarded a Kresnik are reprinted, sold out and borrowed from libraries all summer. The award event itself is one of the best attended in the city; it offers a fusion of the literary, the mythical and the natural, and the winner even gets to light the bonfire after the award is announced.

Competing in this year's final battle for best novel, the jury having looked at more than 100, were Goran Vojnovič (b. 1980) with the family novel *Figa* (*The Fig*), Mojca Kumerdej (b. 1964) with her

historical novel *Kronosova žetev* (*Harvest of Chronos*), Tadej Golob (b. 1967) with his crime story *Jezero* (*The Lake*), Gašper Kralj with his novel *Rok trajanja* (*Sell By Date*) and Tomo Podstenšek (b. 1981) with his novel *Papir, kamen, škarje* (*Paper, Rock, Scissors*). Although no one knew the jury's favourites, the public was mainly divided between two novels: *Harvest of Chronos* by Mojca Kumerdej, who already won this year's most important state prize for her work, and *The Fig* by Goran Vojnovič, who is one of the most popular Slovenian writers and had already received two Kresnik prizes for earlier novels. In the end, Vojnovič won his third award, and *The Fig* thus bore out the expectations of the critics, who had already marked it out for the prize when it was first published more than a year before.

Each of the five finalists are worthy of note, so you can read more about them below and decide which ones you would like to check out when they are translated.

Mojca Kumerdej: *Kronosova žetev* (*Harvest of Chronos*, *Beletrina*)

The critics unanimously declared *Harvest of Chronos* a literary masterpiece, which, in addition to the author's refined style occasionally infused with irony, is distinguished by great historical erudition. The novel is set at the end of the 16th century in the province of Inner Austria (which contained almost the entire ethnic Slovenian lands), when lives were shaken by disputes and battles for dominance between the Catholic Habsburg overlords and the Protestant provincial estates. But we would be doing the literary dimension of the book a disservice to call it merely a historical novel.

It is much more, it is a tale of people at a time in history, and bears witness to how although the times may change, human nature remains the same.

When *Harvest of Chronos* talks about the past, it also analyses the present. The novel will be available to read in English this year, and soon also in a German translation.

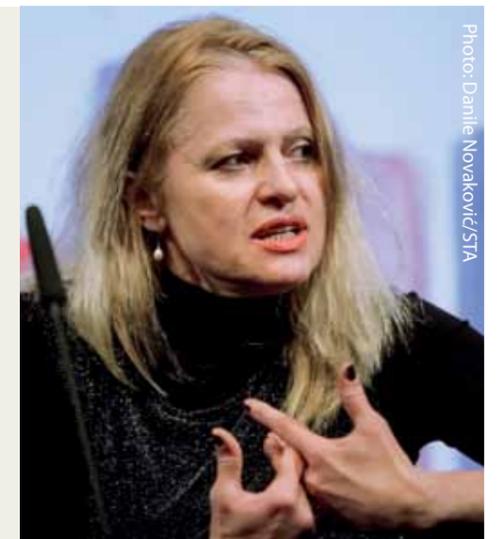


Photo: Danile Novakovič/STA



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Tadej Golob: Jezero (The Lake, Goga)

Those familiar with Slovenian culture are convinced that it has problems with genre: Slovenians do not know how to write good genre books or make good genre films; instead everyone is trying to be a "serious" artist. Tadej Golob, a writer who already showed how "serious" he could be back in 2010, when his first novel Pig Trotters won the Kresnik, took up the genre challenge and wrote a proper Slovenian crime novel.

The work tells the story of Inspector Taras Birsa, who on the night of New Year's Eve finds a headless corpse in Lake Bohinj.

But how do you find the killer if you don't know who has been killed? While Birsa grapples with this question, Golob takes the reader adroitly through five hundred pages of Scandinavian noir that take place in Slovenia. In the coming year, the national TV station will turn the book into a six-part mini-series.

Gašper Kralj: Rok trajanja (Sell By Date, *cf)

Kralj is in fact a doctor of social anthropology, and Sell By Date, his first novel, was one of the major literary surprises of the past year. It tells the story of an unnamed carer for the dying, who is physically capable of performing his occupation with extreme efficiency and care, but death, which surrounds him, never touches his emotions. The dying are his little projects, and he consistently notes down everything that happens to them: he records the methods used in their care and their last words. His notes are imbued with a seriousness, since he realises that he would not exist without the patients, that it is only they who keep him alive and give his existence meaning.

Kralj draws a very clear psychological portrait of the narrator, until he sends him off the rails, where we discover links and similarities in the causes of death.

In genre terms, the novel at this point becomes reminiscent of thrillers, and right up until the end the readers have no idea what they are dealing with.



Photo: Carlos Sánchez Ruiz



Photo: Domen Ulbl

Tomo Podstenšek: Papir, kamen, škarje (Paper, Rock, Scissors, Li-tera)

Podstenšek is one of the most prolific Slovenian writers of the younger generation. His latest novel has placed him for the first time among the five finalists for the Kresnik prize.

The book Paper, Rock, Scissors tells the story of Simon, a middle-aged primary school geography teacher, who appears to lack nothing: he has a safe job and navigates life without conflict.

But the reader soon grasps that the apparent absence of conflict in Simon's life in fact causes major friction and tension, due to of all the repression he accepts in his daily life. Things get complicated when he receives an invitation to his 30th school reunion and wonders whether he can face his own past, especially a tragic event that has hounded and haunted him right up to the present day.

Goran Vojnovič: Figa (The Fig, Beletrina)

The Fig is Vojnovič's third novel, and although it has not been as widely read as his previous works Čefurji raus! (Southern Scum, Go Home!) and Jugoslavija moja dežela (Yugoslavia, My Fatherland), the critics have singled it out as his best and most mature publication to date. The Fig is a family and social novel that centres around the character of Jadran, who is dealing with the various losses that have marked his life: his grandfather's suicide, his father's deletion (from Slovenia's register of permanent residents) and his partner's departure.

The book deals with the hardest questions of what is love and what is the meaning of an incurable disease, it delves into separation and finds that all a person gets from freedom is a fearful loneliness.

His previous two novels, which like the latest one brought Vojnovič the Kresnik prize, stirred up and divided the public, but The Fig is a much more intimate work. Before The Fig is translated into other languages (starting with German), we recommend you read Vojnovič's previous best-sellers, which are available in eight different languages: Southern Scum, Go Home! and Yugoslavia, My Fatherland.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

FABJAN HAFNER TRANSLATION PRIZE

The Goethe-Institut has launched a prize for works translated from German to Slovenian, and vice versa

AMALIJA MAČEK

PHOTO: GOETHE-INSTITUT LJUBLJANA

Director of the Goethe-Institut Ljubljana, Uwe Reissig:

"World literature is written by translators" (José Saramago) – if the Austrian Hammer Purgstall had not translated Hafez into German, perhaps Goethe would never have written West-Eastern Divan, the key work of world literature for understanding other cultures! The essence of Slovenian culture and history can only be understood in translations of the exceptionally rich Slovenian literary creativity. For me, translation therefore ranks among those cultural activities that must be as generously supported as possible. For this reason, too, Prof. Dr. h. c. Klaus Lehmann, President of the entire Goethe-Institut, has taken on the role of honorary patron of the Fabjan Hafner Prize.



The Fabjan Hafner Prize for the best translation of the past two years from German into Slovenian will be awarded for the first time at the Slovenian Book Fair in Ljubljana in November 2017, and a prize of the same name for translations from Slovenian into German will be awarded at the Leipzig Book Fair in March 2018.

The prize winner will receive a scholarship and residence at the famous literary house Literary Colloquium Berlin. This is the second bilateral translation prize between Slovenian and another language, after the model of Spain, which for a number of years now has been awarding the esAsi prize to established and young translators working from Spanish into Slovenian. A major gain is of course the bilateral biennial awarding of the prize. In Ljubljana, it will be presented by the Slovenian President, Borut Pahor.

The initiative for the prize was launched by the Goethe Institute and the Slovenian Book Agency as part of preparations for Slovenia's appearance as the guest of honor at Frankfurt Book Fair.

The Goethe-Institut in Ljubljana will be awarding the prize in cooperation with the Musil Institute in Klagenfurt and the Literary Colloquium Berlin. Director Uwe Reissig is convinced that the Goethe-Institut staff are not there just to "deal with their own things," so he was able to get the Institut in Ljubljana to move to new premises and once again provide German language courses, exams in active knowledge of German, related competitions and other forms of education and culture.

The Fabjan Hafner Prize therefore represents a major opportunity for raising the profile of Slovenian and German-speaking translators and authors, since the prize is also a great reference for a translated author, who will thereby gain greater media attention, while the quality of the translated work is vital for the wider readership of a given author and for possible future translations.

The prize is named after the all too early departed translator, poet, scientist and lecturer Fabjan Hafner (1966-2016), who even during his lifetime in Slovenia, Austria and Germany was so popular, appreciated and influential that he needs no special introduction. His scientific work focused principally on the creative production of one of the best modern stylists in the German language, Peter Handke. In addition to his scientific and educational work, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to translations from Slovenian into

German, for which he received the Petrarch Prize and the prize of the city of Münster. Being bilingual, he translated only those authors with whom he could identify (Uroš Zupan, Maruša Krese, Maja Vidmar, Tomaž Šalamun, and so on). In his joking way, Hafner explained that he mainly translated poetry because, faced with a heavy daily workload, poems were shorter and took less time than other projects. However, we all know that he translated verse superbly because he was also himself a finely tuned poet in both languages, which is sadly something the general public is less aware of, owing to the unavailability of some of his already sold out poetry collections. He said that the first precondition for being a successful literary translator, given the frequently very low remuneration, was simply a love of translating. This of course he imparted to his students and colleagues, whom he was always ready to help, as a living, roguish and friendly encyclopaedia of knowledge, as well as a sharp critic of bad books and poor translations. The new leadership of the Musil Institute is aware of what an invaluable colleague they have lost, so they themselves have expressed a desire to collaborate in awarding the prize that bears his name.

The translators who receive the prize also receive a scholarship (this year EUR 2,000) and paid travel costs and living expenses for one month.

The translators will certainly be delighted at the chance to translate or pursue research free of any cares at the legendary institution the Literary Colloquium Berlin (LCB), where Ingeborg Bachmann stayed the night in a small room with a tower, and Max Frisch bathed in the little pool in the garden. More than anything, translators all over the world know the LCB well for its summer translation academy and spring meeting of translators. Watching over all these developments is Jürgen Jakob Becker, who also heads the Deutscher Übersetzerfonds translation fund, and is a persevering champion of the professional rights of translators and their visibility – including at the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs. He will most certainly offer his human warmth in receiving the winners of the Fabjan Hafner Prize, which he helped establish.

THE BLACK ART IN COLOURS

The idea of our small size is mistaken

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: NUK ARCHIVES



Nicholas of Osimo, TI 21969, typical Italian ornamentation. Prints intended for Italian buyers were most commonly ornamented with white vine stems on a dark background (called bianchi girari) and decorative bordering using thread-like interweaving of different coloured flowers – this incunabulum combines both aesthetic orientations on the front cover (exhibited).

On 20 June the National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana opened an exhibition of incunabula entitled *The Black Art in Colours*. NUK keeps a little under 500 copies of early prints or incunabula, which are printed books or fragments printed from the mid-15th century up to the end of the year 1500. The exhibition displays a selection of some of the finest, most iconic or especially eloquent examples, which can be viewed up until 22 September.

The exhibition is the first step within a larger project, or rather part of several events through which this year and partly in the next the library will offer insights into Renaissance humanism in the old province of Carniola.

Since the earliest times Ljubljana has been a vibrant centre of humanism.

As art historian and codicologist Dr Nataša Golob points out: “We need to stop talking about the small size. If we knew our history properly, we would sooner talk about important actions and great people. In this land much took place over history. Impulses came here from all over, while its people went off to all corners of the world with knowledge and innovativeness. And in the provinces of Carniola and Štajerska (Styria) there was no shortage of ideas or productivity.” She has devoted the greater part of her long career to early books and priceless manuscripts or printed sources, and in doing so has frequently realised that preconceptions regarding Slovenia’s small size are mistaken.

CO-EXISTENCE OF MECHANICAL AND MANUAL ART

The exhibition draws attention to the co-existence of the mechanical “black” art and the manual – painting and colouring – process involved in producing books in the 15th century. The earliest printed books, or incunabula, in fact retained many of the structural elements that had been developed over the centuries by manuscript scribes. The 14 items on display are therefore arranged into incunabula that acquired their painted illumination in the style of the German lands, and those in which the master used a brush or

pen to imbue the printed work with elements of Italian art. The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, which describes the exhibits, presents the NUK collection of incunabula, and offers an overview of the features of book illumination and printed illustration in the 15th century, with a selection of more than 90 of the most fascinating details. Moreover, in the creative corner visitors can themselves try their hand at illuminating incunabula.

This is the first exhibition devoted to incunabula with the elements of painting that distinguish woodcut illustrations. The early incunabula featured this, and later these elements were used after 1480 and in books intended for wider readership.

Soon the Mladinska knjiga publishing house will issue its long-awaited monograph on such manuscripts, *S črnilom in zlatom: knjižno slikarstvo iz slovenskih zbirk 850-1550* (Ink and Gold: book illustration from the Slovenian collections 850-1550), which has already generated a high number of advance orders. The exhibition of incunabula at NUK is accompanied by a handsome catalogue, which in addition to the work of art historian Dr Nataša Golob includes contributions from Marijan Rupert MA and Dr Sonja Svoljšak. The exhibition and publication are important advances in our knowledge of incunabula, for they offer a first treatment of this tradition of book illustration in terms of the individual schools and the links between them.

PRINTED LETTERS SUPPLANT HANDWRITING

One of the key changes brought about by incunabula was of course that the “law of printed letters” supplanted handwriting by individuals.

Yet for many books the printing machine simply replaced the scribe, while the illustrations were still added by the hands of artists.

In more recent times, the nature of the work of book illustrators has changed, at least in places, and illustrations themselves no longer constitute the kind of novelty that can be observed in the times of early manuscript illumination, which often shaped and dictated the principal stylistic orientations for paintings of the era.

While the Gutenberg Bible was probably printed in just 180 copies, at the end of the 15th century there were print runs going up to 1,000. In Venice some texts were apparently printed in as many as 2,000 copies, and we cannot imagine the number of printed copies of Latin and Greek materials that were needed every year. In short, the development of printing was surprisingly rapid. The larger print runs also made printed books markedly less expensive. At first a considerable sum of money was required for an incunabulum. By around 1490 the printed collected works of St Ambrose (three volumes with 860 folios, or 1,720 pages) cost a whole *cekin* coin, while just 13 parchment folios could be had for the same price. In the same year a hand transcribed and illustrated missal cost 33 *cekins*, as noted on the cover of the volume which (as Ms 8) is kept in the Maribor Archbishop’s archives. There was thus a huge price range for books at this time.

MANUSCRIPT BOOK – UNIQUE PRODUCT

In around 1480 manuscript books became a unique product that could be afforded by bibliophiles, and a manuscript was a prestigious gift. From that time on manuscripts were mainly unusual or

special texts that did not have a large circle of readers.

Books were printed for works that had guaranteed sales, such as The Bible, treatises on its substance (e.g. the works of Peter Lombard), collections of famous authors, such as St Augustine, St Hieronymus, Gregory the Great and liturgical books, breviaries, missals and pontificals. The print runs for these were large. If you can imagine, in the German lands alone at the end of the 15th century there were almost 700 dioceses, and each one required pontificals, while each parish church also needed missals, antiphonaries, worship books and so forth, so liturgical books were big business. It took some time longer before narrative texts, such as chivalric epics, were printed, and the print runs were much smaller for these.

The time in which incunabula were created was in many respects similar to today. Then, too, the biggest selling book titles were textbooks, and those printers who wanted to succeed had to devote themselves to the market and understand their buyers. A few suddenly became affluent and distinguished members of society. Printers were generally very well-educated, as many had graduated from university and had master’s degrees, and so were familiar with the important and new professional literature. Alongside the printers were the scientists with whom they collaborated on translations, linguistic editing and scientific commentary.

Printers such as Aldus Manutius in Venice in fact ranked among the intellectual (and financial) elite of the city. But not all printers had a sense and feeling for business. Some lived for the quality of the printed matter in all respects, while others were driven by the jangling of coins, and soon became unimaginably rich. It was similar to today, when someone goes into business, finds a market niche, offers a technical innovation and suddenly they become number one in that field. At the same time, their competitors have totally collapsed. A printer could release a book that contained only the printed text, but the same work could be sold for more money if it included brightly painted initials to attract the buyer’s eye. However, while a beautiful product was more attractive, there were few who could actually afford not just a richly decorated title page for the first volume, but also wonderful title pages for the second, third and fifth books in a set.



A presentation of the painting and colouring process involved in producing books in the 15th century.

Peter Svetina (born 1970) is a writer, poet, translator, literary historian and theoretician. His work is aimed at adults, children and youth. His work has been translated into multiple languages, including English, German, Korean, Polish, Lithuanian and Spanish. His opus cannot be put into any mould, for among his works you can find various literary genres and types, so it is no wonder that he has received a range of awards, especially in the area of children's and youth literature. There is, however, one common factor – humour.

Peter is also an exceptionally prolific author, in the past 20 years having published more than 30 books – the great majority children's books. The books highlighted below are each in their own way inspiring for adults, too.

*What are you? Poet, writer, teacher, translator? What should we write? Alpinist. Write Alpinist.**

*from the poem "Alpinist," Peter Svetina: *A Slow Afternoon*. Cankarjeva založba 2011



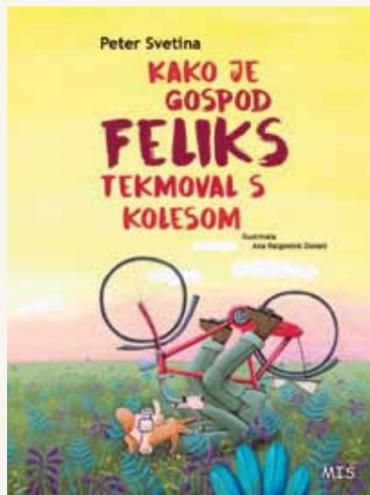
Prayers from the Steps – Illustrated by Ana Zavadlav, Mladinska knjiga 2016

This tiny collection of poetry is made up of little prayers by a child who is creating a dialogue with God, and asking about faith and trust. The prayers reveal who and what are important in the child's life, what worries or makes the child happy. The prayers are thus a chance to enter into the child's intimate world. Even though this collection contains a lot of humour and joy, the overriding sense in the book is one of warmth, which is also the guiding light for the outstanding illustrations.

PETER SVETINA

Outside any mould

KATJA STERGAR

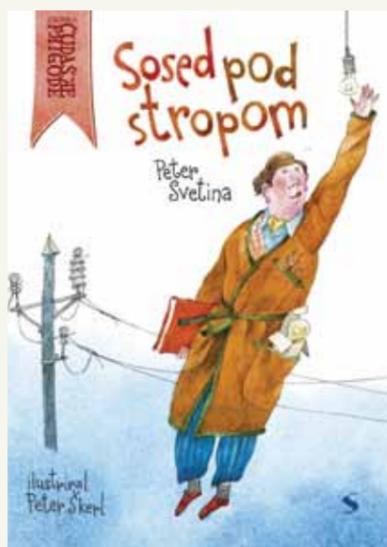
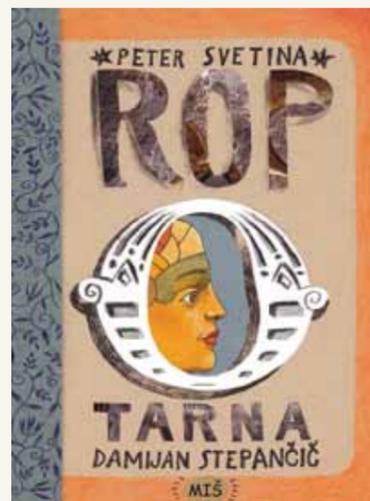


How Mister Felix Entered a Bicycle Race – Illustrated by Ana Razpotnik Donati, Založba Miš 2016

Social expectations are high, you have to be the best, the fastest, you need to win. What else can a person do in a race?! We encourage even the youngest children to be competitive, but then wonder why people forget about compassion and become increasingly narcissistic and egoistic. Felix competes in a race and is winning, but at the same time he sees the world, drinks lemonade and soaks his bottom in a pond. He is winning in a way that we should all appreciate. Especially since the illustrator succeeded in finding the right idiom and appropriate tempo for this beautiful world of ours.

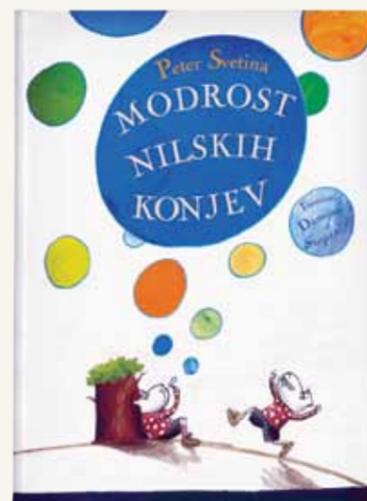
The Lumber Room – Illustrated by Damijan Stepančič, Založba Miš 2012

A collection of short and long tales, poems and miniature texts, this is a veritable lumber room. In all the texts the writer plays with language, rhythm and forms, he plays with the reader’s anticipation, tests the reader’s mind and stimulates curiosity. The illustrator does the same thing on the visual level, since each page is unique and full of surprises. Both writer and illustrator retain their characteristic wit and in so doing enrich each other.



Neighbour under the Ceiling – Illustrated by Peter Škerl, Sodobnost Internacional 2016

In this book all the craziest stories are even crazier, turned on their head, twisted, waggish and mischievous. When the neighbour dangles below the ceiling, only his neighbour can help him on the floor – or preferably she can fly up under the ceiling too. When there is no jam in the doughnut, it is clear that someone has eaten it, but it is not entirely clear that someone could move into the doughnut – just because of the jam. When Peter and Peter get together, the world is so colourful that sometimes the illustrations tell an entirely new story.



The Wisdom of Hippos – Illustrated by Damijan Stepančič, DZS 2010

Hubert and Marcel are hippopotami who do not take life as a bare fact, but come to know life, to taste it, reflect on it a bit, learn something about it – or perhaps not – and, especially, enjoy it with friends. The sentences, but also the stories as wholes, are clear and short, without any unnecessary baggage; they are full of dynamism, sometimes lyricism, while sometimes being concise, yet always full of humour and optimism. Occasionally the author deliberately foregoes adult auto-censoring and spices up the text here and there by depicting characters who are not always role models. This not only allows children to think independently, but encourages them by making them doubt, by giving them a chance to be wise.

A tale from the children’s book *The Wisdom of Hippos*.

A Bundle of Rhymes (translated by Gregor Timothy Čeh)

Hippos Hubert and Marcel sat under the plane tree, throwing balls of mud into the water.

“I would really like to make a poem,” said Marcel.

“Can I help you?” asked Hubert.

“Do you even know what a poem is?” Marcel enquired.

“Hmm, I don’t think so,” Hubert replied.

Then they sat in silence and continued throwing balls of mud into the water.

“A poem is kind of – a bundle of rhymes,” Marcel suggested after a while.

“And what is a rhyme?” Hubert wondered.

“A rhyme is, for example, when you say, grass and hay – fresh veggies today,” Marcel explained.

“Which is the rhyme, the grass or the veggies?”

“Both are rhymes. Grass and hay rhymes with veggies today, get it?”

“Oh, now I see,” said Hubert.

At noon they stood up and said to the plane tree, “Well, goodbye and good luck.” And they left.

In the evening Hubert knocked at Marcel’s door.

“Look,” he said. “I don’t know whether you’ll like it, but I managed to make one of these poems.”

In his paws he held a bunch of grass and hay, a cabbage, two leeks, three carrots and some parsley. It was all tied into a neat bundle.

“You’re a real friend,” said Marcel and invited Hubert into the living room.

“I doubt anyone else could make such a good poem,” said Marcel when they had finished munching on the last sprig of parsley.





A LOOK AT MANICA K. MUSIL

How to sew together a picture book

GORAN ČERNE POTOČNIK
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

A piano, architecture, a childhood with special needs peers, family (spouse Bojan, son Izidor and daughters Neža and Jera). Four elements in the life of Manica K. Musil that have left an indelible imprint on her creativity. Playing the piano gave her the capacity for abstraction. Architecture expanded her view of creativity. Childhood familiarised her with being different, making it seem quite normal. Her family offers her inspiration, encouragement and security.

With her many successful endeavours in publishing and exhibitions, Manica has shaken up the world of picture books, in Slovenia, Brazil, China, Turkey, and Pakistan. Doors are opening wide for her elsewhere, too, as confirmed by numerous awards that have recognised her innovative approach and use of unusual techniques.

Manica sews, glues, crochets and draws her picture books. They are not just beautiful, fascinating and attractive to the gaze and touch, they are also instructive and educational – without moralising.

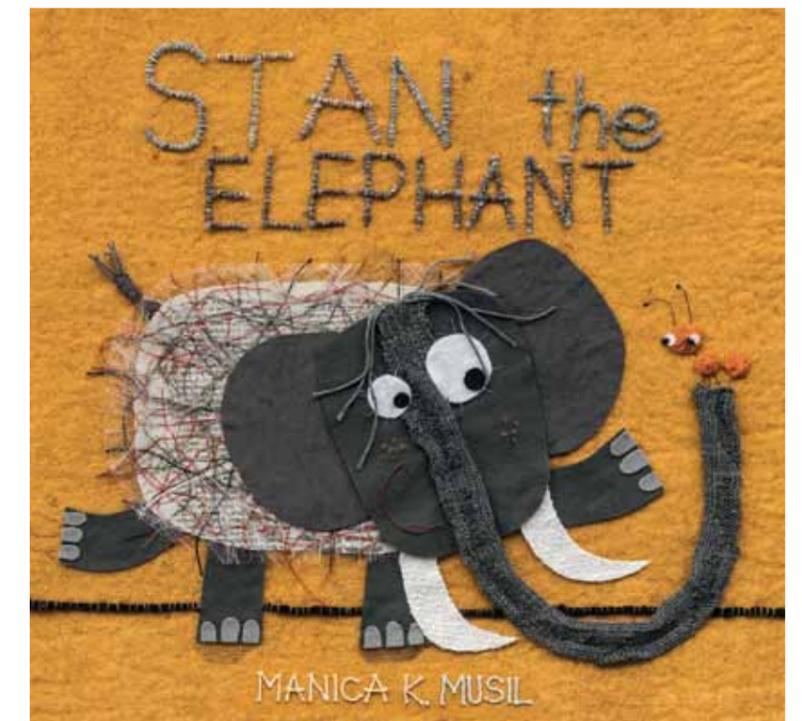
CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

Manica was born near Ptuj in northeast Slovenia – in one of the oldest Slovenian towns. Her childhood is linked to a Baroque mansion that housed an institute for adolescents and children with learning difficulties, where her parents were employed. In this way, she got to know other worlds, and in the park she played with those pushed to the margins of society.

Then the family moved to Maribor, where Manica attended grammar school and secondary music school. Here, the piano occupied an important place in the life of this blossoming school girl.

ARCHITECTURE

When Manica was wavering between studying the piano and everything else (medicine, fine art, architecture), what swayed her was that she did not want





to be just a performer of other people's work. Moreover, her decision to follow architecture had a further benefit, since it gave her a broad view of things and taught her to think on multiple levels.

After graduating Manica was very active, and received several awards as a young architect. Then one after the other came three children, so for a while her creativity made way for other obligations. Still, that inventiveness kept simmering quietly in the background, and burst forth in 2011. Although architecture gradually became side-lined in her work, Manica's first two picture books deal with the topic: *Two Little Architects* and *The Magic Pencil* (both 2012).

OUTBURST OF CREATIVE ENERGY

More picture books came one after another. Manica did everything – writing the text, putting together the material for illustrations, and designing the whole thing. First she worked with Slovenian publishers, but soon she gained attention abroad. The story almost reads like a film script. She packed up her materials, gathered together her prizes (she had submitted illustrations to international competitions) and already printed picture books, and set off for the Bologna Book Fair. Then in 2014 *Koza Cilka* (*Cecilia the Goat*) was published in Brazil (by the publisher Bicho Esperto). This was followed in 2016 and 2017 in China by *The Naughty Pigs*, *The Magic Shell*, *Cecilia the Goat*, *Cecilia and Who Drank the Water*, *Stan the Elephant and the Magic Shell* (*Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House*), *Johnny Mosquito*, *Franky the Anteater* and *Three Kittens and a Dragon* (*Modern Press Co.*). In Turkey, Timaş Publishing brought out *Three Kittens and a Dragon*, *The Magic Shell* and *Franky the Anteater*. Preparations are now underway for Oxford University Press to publish an English and Urdu version of *Stan the Elephant* in Pakistan.

Over the years Manica has perfected her approach to making picture books. They reveal a strong architectural influence, which has emboldened her to use unusual and innovative technologies and practices.

She no longer simply draws her illustrations, but sews, glues and crochets them.

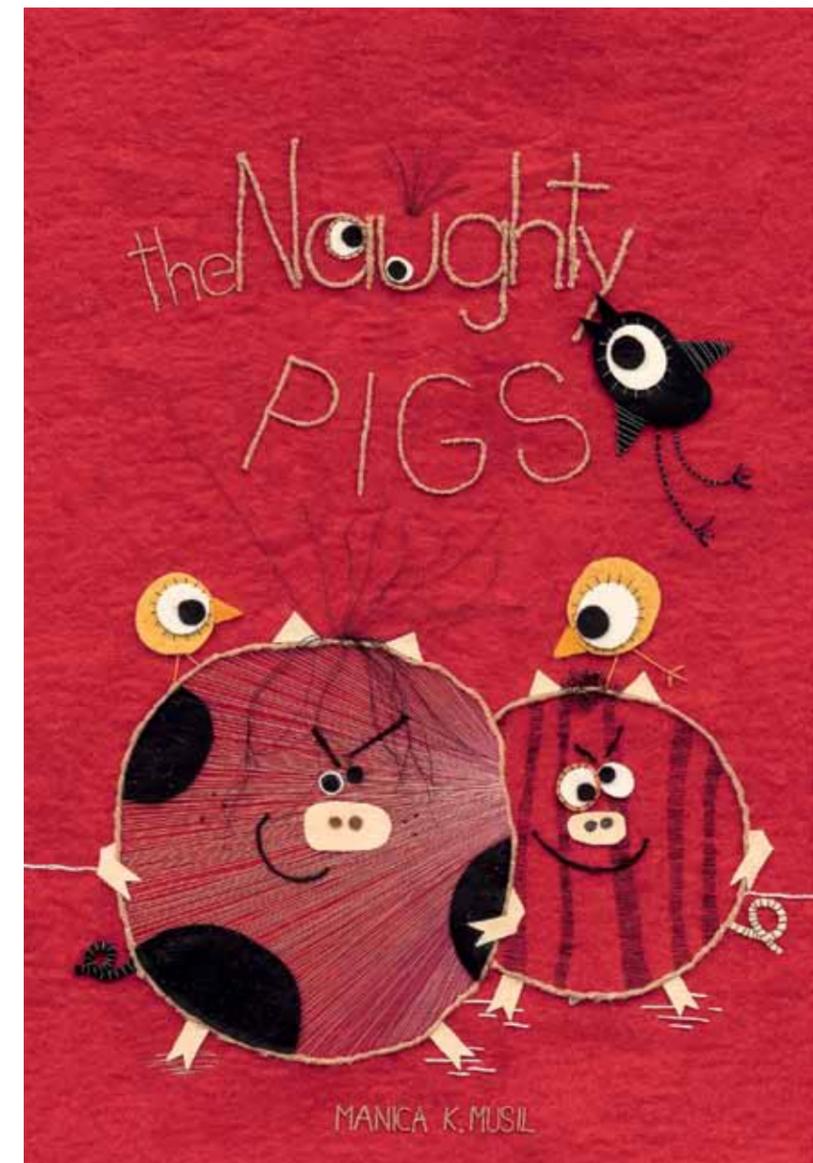
These processes are very slow, but the end products are very attractive and seen as rather unique on the international publishing market.

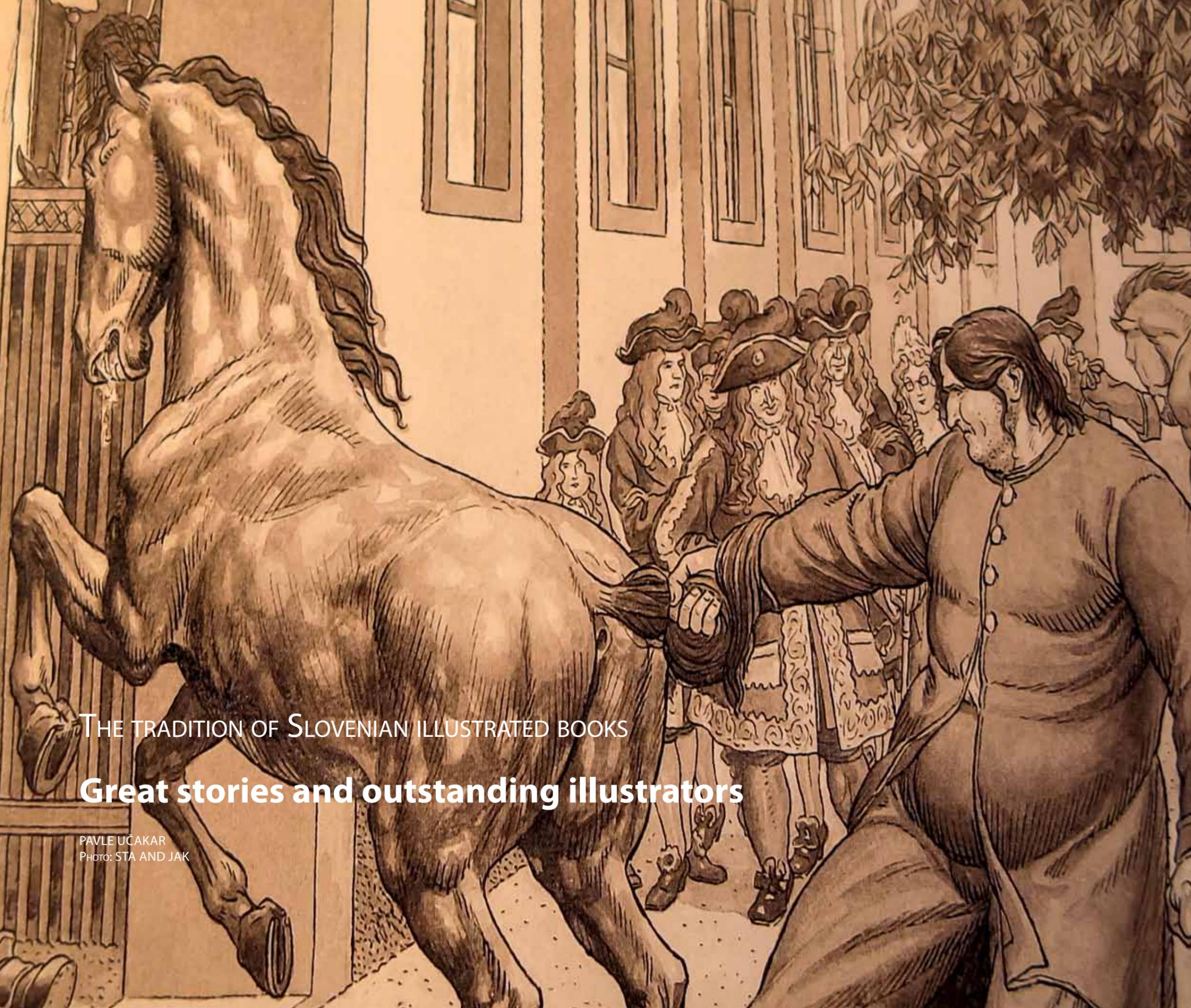
AWARDS AND EXHIBITIONS

Manica has received awards for her artwork. *The Naughty Pigs* "Best Books in Jiangsu Province," China, 2017. *Three Kittens and a Dragon* and *The Naughty Pigs* at the 5th Book Illustration Festival 'BookILL Fest' Serbia, 2017 and 2016. Two gold medals for illustration of the picture books *Stan the Elephant* and *Three Kittens and a Dragon* in the competition run by the international New York publication *The Magazine of Contemporary Illustration 3x3*, 2016. "Best of the Best" for *The Naughty Pigs* in the Hiii Illustration competition, China, 2015. Most Beautiful Book of the Slovenian Book Fair for *The Naughty Pigs*, Slovenia, 2015. Ten best illustrators at the COW Illustration Festival, Ukraine, 2014.

In addition to her illustration work, Manica is also active in other areas. She makes various practical items (bags, wall clocks and more) that are thematically linked to the heroes in her stories.

The Naughty Pigs has now been adapted into a puppet show by the Maribor Puppet Theatre, which is also working on the children's project *Pišeki*. Manica exhibits a lot, too. *The Thread Unravalled* (group exhibition) at VM Art Gallery in Karachi, Pakistan, 2017. Invitation to the Exhibition of Picture Books at International Cultural Industry, Shenzhen, China, 2017. Solo exhibition at the gallery of the Nanjing Art Institute, Nanjing, China, 2016. In the last three years, she has also participated in several group exhibitions: Klovičevi dvori Gallery, the 5th Croatian Biennial of Illustration, Zagreb, Croatia, 2016. The 5th Book Illustration Festival 'BookILL Fest' Novi Sad, Serbia, 2016. The Biennial of Illustration BIBIANA, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2015. COW International Design Festival (participation in the exhibition), Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, 2014. And the invitations keep coming.





THE TRADITION OF SLOVENIAN ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

Great stories and outstanding illustrators

PAVLE UČAKAR
PHOTO: STA AND JAK

The biggest Slovenian publisher, Mladinska knjiga, publishes 40 illustrated children's books a year. Famous Slovenian authors and book artists have worked with Mladinska knjiga to create and render in visual images an entire animal kingdom of literary heroes, among whom those with highest cult status include the Slovenian bear Piki Jakob, Muri the cat and Sapra the mouse. But special status is reserved for the oldest of them all – the Slovenian salt smuggler Martin Krpan.

This year we are celebrating one hundred years of Slovenian picture books.

The first one is considered to be *Martin Krpan* by Fran Levstik, with illustrations by the painter Hinko Smrekar.

THE FIRST PICTURE BOOK WAS MARTIN KRPAN

As befits such an old picture book, it was printed and published in the form of a small binder. But that was with poor-quality paper and ink, which has now faded a lot, and the paper has gone quite brown. However, the text is elaborate and perfectly structured, and the illustrations are true works of art, made with great effort, knowledge and talent. When I learned about the format of the originals, which are a full 38 cm high, it was clear that Smrekar drew the illustrations as "true" paintings and that they were not just images knocked off to earn a penny. Masterfully laid out, full of detail, beautifully executed and above all, authentic Smrekar. The ambition evident in these pictures is breathtaking. There are no compromises apparent in the creation of the project, but rather an extraordinary commitment to it becoming a true cultural event.

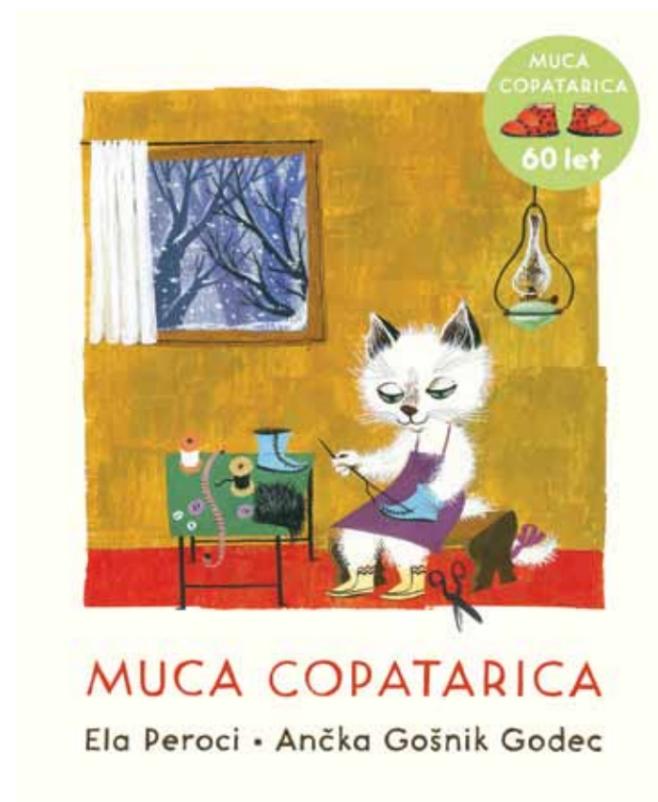
This picture book is incontrovertibly a Slovenian national monument, and I believe that Levstik and Smrekar would not grudge us the pride we take in "using" the book.

This work is an example of the relationship of the artist with the particular field of work, which began with Krpan and has not let up, even in today's production.

We could say that this spirit still pervades Slovenian illustration, if not even more so today.

ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD FOR CHILDREN

That book was followed by others and many more, especially after the Second World War with the founding of Mladinska knjiga pub-



lishing. The first editor, Kristina Brenk, set the standards and rules for work which are still applied today.

Her motto, that “only the best is good for children,” was possibly an unconscious influence on these “protobooks.”

Those of us who work today in children's publishing are just protecting the Holy Grail that is the creative atmosphere and unquestionably uncompromising quality, along with how each author is competing with themselves. The most interesting aspect is that among these creative people there is no sign of envy or disagreeable competitiveness. The environment is unusually homogeneous. I myself explain this mainly by the fact that each author can develop their own style, and in this way they are no threat to others.

At international book fairs we often hear praise and admiration for how superb the quality is and how such diverse authors are working in such a small cultural arena or book market. But this involves the conscious cultivation of a diversity of aesthetics. Even the most successful type, which we would like to exploit commercially as much as possible, mutates into the next phase, which is worthy of support, since we are counting on it being even better than the previous one. And often enough it is.

TODAY PICTURE BOOKS ARE IN GREAT SHAPE IN SLOVENIA

Their creators receive international attention and awards. The export of copyrights has in just a few years attained multiples of the success from 15 years ago. Each publisher wants new, unusual and innovative works. Under certain conditions one could say this is a kind of trend in global children's book production. But it was not always this way. In Slovenia, too, we have felt the pressure of capital in terms of producing cheaper products that might bring in cash more quickly. This is a pressure which would constrain the imagination of authors and illustrators, and kowtow to some imaginary trends or some “average buyer,” although no one can define what or who that is. But these attempts have very quickly been shown to be unsuccessful. Those of us who

advocate for individuality and autonomy of artistic style have succeeded in demonstrating to the business people that outstanding quality and originality are supremely bankable qualities, and that long-term financial success lies in just such an approach.

In a small market of two million potential buyers of picture books we have plenty of titles that have been reprinted, even after 60 years or more.

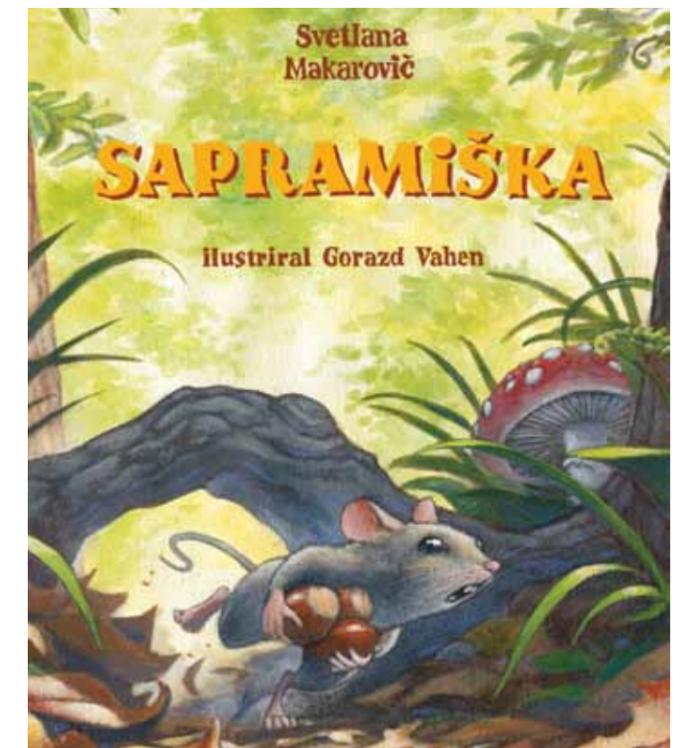
Some exceptional titles have enjoyed print runs of over 150,000 (for instance *Martin Krpan*, with illustrations by Tone Kralj, achieved a record of more than 240,000 copies sold), which is undoubtedly a phenomenon worthy of comparison with the success of Harry Potter on the Slovenian market.

Another unusual phenomenon is that adult buyers wander into bookshops to buy books for themselves simply because they are outstanding works of art. And that phenomenon is growing.

But in truth that is not so strange. Imagine an adult who was exposed to reading superb picture books as a child. That influence is enormously powerful in the formative years, and remains so throughout life. When those children become parents, they will buy their children the same books and a few new ones, too, that will remind them of their own wonderful experience in childhood, and so on from generation to generation. This strengthens the awareness that truly good books are a treasure trove for children that must always be cultivated. The same applies on the national level. Cultural institutions ensure co-financing for original projects, which increases the output and vitality of this branch of the arts. They also help in the publishing of those truly special, “borderline” cases, which are essential for maintaining the variety of production and strengthening tradition through ever new aesthetic “inventions.” Without this help, it would be much harder to maintain the vitality of this sector, yet at the same time I would dare to say that this help is not critical.

What is critical is an awareness among adult buyers (parents, educators, teachers) that this is an important sector that has a positive influence on the self-confidence of the people who speak Slovenian. That superlative creativity has a home here too. And that we can hold our heads high in the international book scene. We could identify all this as favourable “climate conditions” for the development of Slovenian illustration, but without strong personalities, artists and originators there would be no such success. Without the energy and ambition, the talent and perseverance of individuals, without mutual encouragement and inspiration, this would be just a small market for selling “no name” products in supermarkets.

I could say that in Slovenia we are spoiled by the quality of children's and youth books, and that is right and proper. It is also right that we are demanding, since “only the best is good for children.”



FOR THE YOUNG AND VERY YOUNGEST

High quality new books from Slovenia

KATJA STERGAR
PHOTO: JAK ARCHIVES



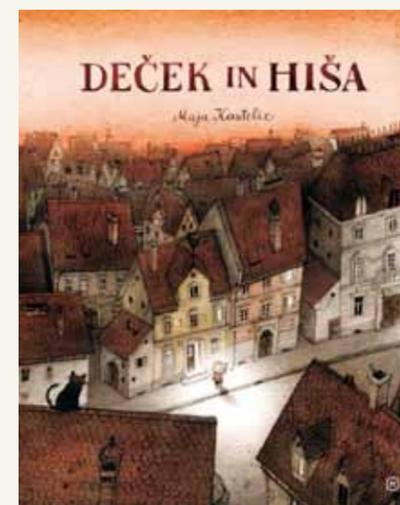
Awarded children's books 2016.
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Around 500 titles of original Slovenian children's and young adults' books are published each year in Slovenia. Some authors and illustrators have already been active on the scene for more than 40 years, and some titles have been reprinted more than 20 times. Translations of others can be found on all continents, while occasionally you can encounter a familiar illustration in the most unexpected corner of the globe.

In Slovenia people walk into bookshops with a smile, since they know that at any moment they can choose from at least ten new and high quality Slovenian books.

And next time they go into the bookshop, they can choose from at least ten more. If I visited a bookshop today, I would choose...

PICTURE BOOKS



Maja Kastelic: *A Boy and a House*, Mladinska knjiga 2015

This wordless picture book conceals more stories than many long texts. A mysterious town, an even more mysterious house and unusual messages lead a boy from the front door to the attic, to new realisations, new views and a new friendship. Illustrations with a wealth of significant detail tell a multifaceted story, which in its simplest form can be understood by the youngest children, and in the same way older ones can enjoy it too. The illustrations are linked together like the frames of a film, but each offers its own story. It is no wonder that the book has sold well around the world, and the illustrations were exhibited at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2015. More recently, Maja Kastelic illustrated the fairy-tale written by Svetlana Makarovič, *The Carrot Dwarf* (Mladinska knjiga 2016), and the poem *Don* by Tone Pavček (Sanje 2016).



Ida Mlakar: *The Cow that Barked at the Moon*, Illustrations: Peter Škerl, Založba Miš 2015

When Peter Škerl gets to work on a text, you can be sure that the story will undergo a superlative visual enhancement in the form of complex illustrations spiced with some refined humour. One of the best examples of this is his work on Barbara Simoniti's *Marshlanders* (Mladinska knjiga, 2012). Here, an ageing cow and a horse on a bike are the new symbols of optimism, presented in this text about overcoming stereotypes and seeking new goals, produced by the author of several outstanding animal picture books. The illustrations and text are balanced, allowing children to have a positive outlook on ageing, which does not just bring illness, infirmity and isolation, but also new and exciting challenges.

Maša Ogrizek: *A Beautiful Story*, Illustrations: Igor Šinkovec, Založba Miš 2017

In Krasnograd (Beautifulville) there are only beautiful things – doughnuts, books, coffee, and the twin brothers Klobučnik; Dr. Booklet and Koder. People who fit together and complement each other. But when a tragedy occurs and one of the twins dies, this changes the life in the town, and only beautiful people can find new beginnings. The meaning of this tale is in the details. This is something fully recognised by the illustrator, himself a famous comic-strip artist, whose colourful and imaginative illustrations capture both the detail and complexity of interpersonal relations. Like the work of Ida Mlakar, this book is also suitable for all the family.



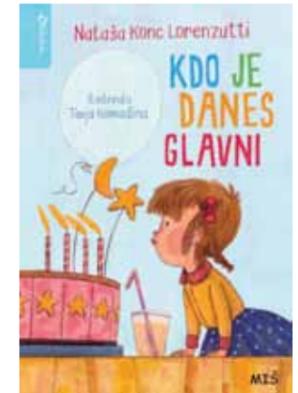
Anja Štefan: *Fruit from Our Ship*, Illustrations: Jelka Reichman, Mladinska knjiga 2016

Jelka Reichman is one of the most acclaimed Slovenian illustrators, who often works with texts created by Anja Štefan, one of the most famous Slovenian storytellers, a virtuoso of rhythm in both prose and poetry, and an author with a select and very eloquent vocabulary. In this project, Reichman's illustrations of fruit have inspired Anja Štefan to add poetry for the youngest readers. This new volume comes after a whole stack of other works from the same tandem, such as *Hazelnuts*, *Hazelnuts*, *The Pot with Spots*, *One Hundred Riddles*, and *Another Hundred Riddles* (all Mladinska knjiga), which rank among the classics of Slovenian children's literature, and have been reprinted several times. These virtuosos of picture and text are also masters at cooperating, with both the images and words reflecting the essence of childhood – curiosity, ease and playfulness.

ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Nataša Konc Lorenzutti: *Who's in Charge Today*, Illustrations: Tanja Komadina, Založba Miš 2015

The main character in this collection of short stories is four-year old Nika, although in a family with four brothers and sisters it is hard to be "the boss." A child's view of everyday life is not seen as a childish view, it's a perspective that many have simply forgotten in their adult years. Using authentic idioms and humour, the author succeeds in presenting the family routine in an original and amusing way. She has similar success in her latest book *I'm Not a Brat!* (Illustrations: Ana Zavadlav, Mladinska knjiga 2017), in which the main character is eight-year old Polona. The illustrator, Tanja Komadina, who has recently delved into longer texts for children (e.g. *Maša Ogrizek: The Lady with the Hat*, Mladinska knjiga 2017), is able to retain in her illustrations a simplicity that lacks nothing in comic dimension or depth. In this way, the illustrations and text enhance each other at all levels. The text is suitable for family reading and beginning readers.



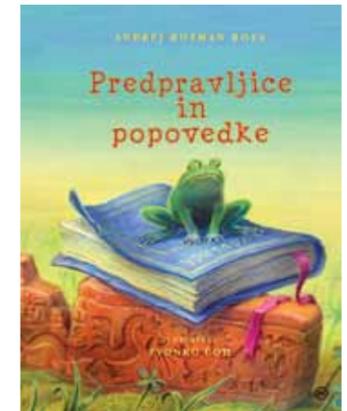
Sebastijan Pregelj: *Juniper, a Boy from a Pile Dwelling; Until the End of the Lake and then Onwards*, Illustrations: Jure Engelsberger, Založba Miš 2016

The author of several translated works for adults and series of short fantasy stories for children about Babujan the Ghost (Illustrations: Ana Razpotnik Donati, Založba Miš 2014, 2016), has in this book delved deeply into history, and places the boy Juniper at the end of the Stone Age. In this series of currently two books, Sebastijan Pregelj, who is a historian by education, creates stories based on historical facts. The Ljubljana Marshes is a source of inspiration and tense adventures, which given their short length are suitable for independent reading for beginners. In addition to the purely literary dimension, the books contain technical explanations of individual terms and references to sources. The black-and-white illustrations of Jure Engelsberger offer plenty of dynamic playfulness that further enhance the stories.



Andrej Rozman Roza: *Pretales and Aftertales*, Illustrations: Zvonko Čoh, Mladinska knjiga 2015

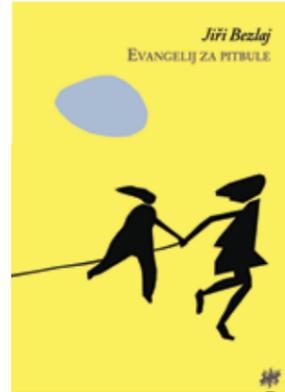
There is no getting around Andrej and Zvonko, for they have been crafting outstanding books for children for so long now that each of them has earned their own collection. Andrej Rozman Roza is the Slovenian Roald Dahl, the king of humour with frequent hints of the disgusting and unseemly. He is a master of drama and rhythm, with dextrous language and word play. In this collection of very diverse stories that are excellent for reading in series, you can enjoy the breadth of his imagination, as well as the hints between the lines to famous literary works and heroes of other authors. Moreover, only Zvonko Čoh is able to bring the same measure of sparkling humour to his exceptionally colourful, almost three-dimensional illustrations, offering equally high-quality depictions of an environmentally aware Water Man or Minka the Hen.



NOVELS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Jiři Bezlej: *Gospel for Pitbulls*, Mladinska knjiga 2016

18-year old Koka is about to take her school-leaving exams when she decides to commit suicide. This cross-over novel, written in juicy slang, jumps like Koka's thoughts from topic to topic, and deliberately avoids anything significant. It seems that the girl grasps the world very superficially, that her life is just a lot of trivia, an unfounded drama. So an attempted suicide is just one more passing dramatic interlude, another false story. Yet gradually the strands of the story merge, the ballast is discarded and the story acquires a core. The linguistically rich and modern text indicates a good knowledge of the world of young people, presenting a convincing and direct experience of their mentality and the ever-present problems, that we so often deny or sweep under the carpet.



Neli Kodrič Filipič: *Tell me the Truth*, Mladinska knjiga 2017

There are three types of people. Those who do not want to stand out, who want to be average, and blend into the background. Then there are those who fear reality and being average, so they escape into the utopian worlds of books, computer games, social media and drugs. Neither of these options are good, for neither allows a person to be their own self in a positive sense. In this novel for teenagers, only the old neighbour is able to maintain his ego – which would be an ideal form of existence – while all the others hide from the truth. The topical problems of the adult world and that of two teenagers – Simon and Eva – are not that different, it's just that flight and freedom take different forms. The author also examines the meaning of freedom and limitation, as well as interpersonal relations, especially in families, which have long since lost their traditional forms and consequently their traditional roles.

Vinko Möderndorfer: *Whale on the Beach*, Mladinska knjiga 2015

The current social climate demands perfection – a person must be the most beautiful, the cleverest, the best; a person must be superlative. If these public trends succeed in hooking adults, who are supposed to be fully constructed personalities, then it is all the more understandable that young people follow the trends too. The teenager Nika is a textbook example of perfection and appeal, being both popular among her new schoolmates and in her family, fulfilling all the high expectations people have of her. Yet it turns out that Nika is just a person who is scared of being different, scared of being Nika, and scared of loving. This outstanding teenage novel, which holds a mirror to young people as well as to all adults, deals with the issue of conventions, various ways of being different and their acceptance. Once again it highlights the issues of appearance and openness.



Photo: Mostphotos

SLOVENIAN COMIC STRIPS FOR DUMMIES

Slovenian comics are alive, loving, kicking and firing

ZORAN SMILJANIČ



The exhibition of Slovenian comic strips.
Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

Slovenian comic strips first saw the light of day in 1927, so this year they are celebrating their 90th anniversary. They survived a monarchy, royal dictatorship, Fascism, Nazism and Communism, and currently they are fighting rampant capitalism. Today this 90-year-old tradition is more alive, active and fruitful than ever.

The themes covered by Slovenian comic strips have always varied, from adventure stories to erotica and social criticism, but what they all have in common is outstanding artists, and this has been especially true over the last ten years.

THE NATURE OF SLOVENIAN COMIC STRIPS

Slovenian comics can be seen as both original and socially-committed versions of the form.

The majority of their creators have avoided the commercial and popular trends that dominate the more developed comic strip markets.

Instead of imitating others, Slovenian comic strips have generated their own unique form of auteur expression. Instead of competing with the big guns, they have taken their own path. Instead of pandering to readers, they educate them.

COMIC STRIP TRAILBLAZERS

The pre-eminent Slovenian comic strip artist is without doubt **Miki Muster**.

Numerous generations of young readers have grown up with his legendary strip *Zvitorepec (Cunning Tail)*.

The adventures of Zvitorepec the fox, Lakotnik the hungry wolf and Trdonja the turtle were drawn in a soft and friendly style, and

today they are still popular among young and old alike. The comic strip artist Miki Muster is Slovenia's answer to Disney. The other main classic artist is **Kostja Gatnik**, most famous for his cult strip *Magna Purga* (1977), which successfully crossed American underground comics with the Slovenian tradition. Gatnik's breaking of taboos, black humour, social criticism and graphic innovation placed him on the world comic strip map. *Magna Purga* can be seen as the Monty Python of Slovenian comic strips.

Tomaž Lavrič undoubtedly ranks among the leading Slovenian comic strip artists,

and this year he received the highest national award in the arts for his work – a Prešeren Fund prize. He is a virtuoso with a wealth of talent in drawing and set design.

He is responsible for numerous masterpieces, including the satirical strip *Diareja*, which has come out weekly for nearly thirty years, the autobiographical *Red Alarm*, the moving Bosnian Tales (which opened the door to France, where it was published by Glénat Editions, and then in Spanish and Italian translations) and the alternative Bible story *Throng of Young Jesus*. Gatnik has received numerous national and international prizes, and his comic strips have often been translated, finding popularity with both readers and critics.

Another veteran of the scene is **Zoran Smiljanič**, who also created the longest Slovenian Western-style comic strip, *Meksikajnarji*, which he concluded last year. It tells the story of Slovenian volunteers who fought in Mexico for Emperor Maximilian during the Habsburg period.

STRIPBURGER – INCUBATOR OF MANY TALENTS

Stripburger is a magazine of international alternative comic strips (“with a distinctive Slovenian aroma”) that has been published for quarter of a century. Under the creative leadership of the indefatigable high priestess of Slovenian comic strips, Katerina Mirovič, it puts out the high-calorie works of foreign and local comic artists, theoretical articles, stand-alone albums, thematic issues, translations, exhibitions and more. Numerous authors have left their mark on Stripburger, some stayed, while others left to build their own careers: the master of the grotesque **Jakob Klemenčič** (*Alma M. Karlin - Cosmopolitan from the Provinces*), the angry **Matjaž Bertonec** (*Macon the Barbarian*), the successful **Matej de Cecco** (*Šnofi's Family*), to name a few.

Moreover, Slovenian comic strip artists are not all men, and recently **Tanja Komadina** made a name for herself in Sweden with her first work *Cool Bike* (*Cool Cykel, Tusen Serier*, 2016), and there is also the unconventional **Kaja Avberšek** (*Singing Castle, Flying Fox*) and **Suzi Bricelj** (*Famous Nuška*).

The local comic book scene is gradually becoming more feminised.

We should also mention a few other notable comic strip creators who have not come exclusively from the Stripburger incubator. The hyper-productive **Damjan Stepančič** brought a new sensitivity to Slovenian comic strips (*Trbovlje, Bohinj, Masquerade*), and offered an expressive reaction to the refugee crisis in the country (*Sneaker*). The musician and comic artist **Martin Ramoveš**, who sings and draws his own songs (*Unjudged Cowboys*); and **Bernard Kolle** is the only Slovenian who lives off comic strip art and publishes exclusively abroad.

IN CONCLUSION

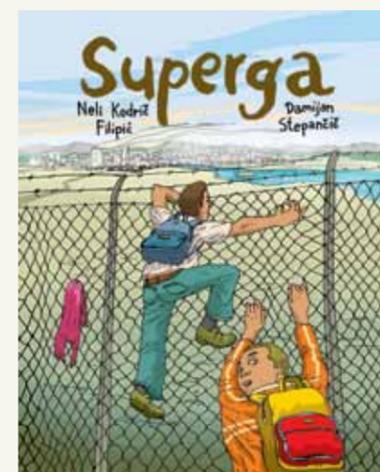
One of the central figures of Slovenian comic strips is the owner of the Buch comic book shop – the publisher, organiser, promoter and more, Aleksander Buh. Then there is the dogged enthusiast Vojko Volavšek, publisher of the magazine *Strip Bumerang*, as well as numerous comic strip albums. We should also mention the *Striparna Pritličje* (Ground Floor Comics) in the centre of Ljubljana, the *Stripolis* event in Kino Šiška, comic strip evenings in Kranj City Library and – OK, that's enough for now. For those we have not mentioned, may their recompense be in the form of global fame, vast print runs, obscene royalties and hordes of eager admirers. In short, Slovenian comic strips are alive, loving, kicking and firing. There is a happy ending.

BE SURE TO CHECK THESE OUT



Tanja Komadina: *Cool Bike*, Forum, 2014

The comic strip tells the story of a boy, Mile, who is driven from his home in Mostar by the war. This shatters his dream of owning a bicycle that he has long admired on display in a store. While staying with his aunt in Slovenia he once again encounters the object of his desire, and this lures him into trouble. This universal story is presented with compassion, and without moralising. All the same, it leaves a bitter aftertaste. Intolerance is present and is handed down from generation to generation. The comic is also featured in an international collection of literature recommended for children all over the world, *White Ravens*, and in Sweden a second edition was printed just one year after publication.

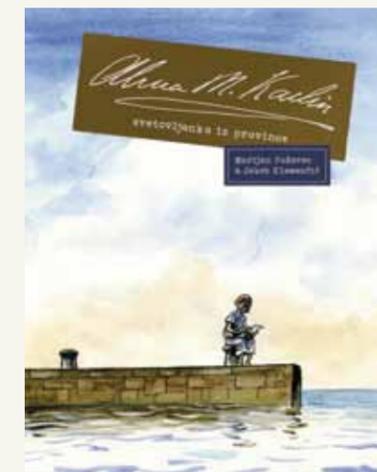


Damijan Stepančič (drawing) and Neli Kodrič Filipič (story): *Sneaker*, Mladika, 2016

A road strip that depicts the three-year journey of a Hazara boy from Afghanistan to the supposed paradise of the West, where he arrives in the wrong Switzerland – that is, in Slovenia. The sneaker enters the story on page 13. When Hamid is crossing the Afghan mountains alone, and is just about to give up, in the middle of nowhere he finds the sneaker. Even though it is just a single sneaker and thus not much use, he believes that the West itself sent the shoe to him to ease his journey. He ties it around his neck as a talisman. He hopes that one day he will find its match. The sneaker embodies a longing for the West of fable. Hamid must believe in the fable, for how else at his age could he survive the arduous and harrowing journey in which he both saves and endangers his life?

Jakob Klemenčič (drawing) and Marijan Pušavec (story): *Alma M. Karlin - Cosmopolitan from the Provinces* (Forum, 2015)

A biographical comic strip album on the writer, polyglot and world traveller Alma M. Karlin, who broke with the conventions of her time and during the 1920s set out alone and with practically no funds on a journey around the world. Following the first-person narration of the protagonist, the comic's authors use subtle black and white drawings to offer a refined portrait of Alma's childhood, travels and life after returning to her home. As a single woman travelling alone she rarely encountered understanding, and what saved Alma was her general broad-mindedness and love of world languages. Before her wild journey, during it and after, she made her living through translation, interpreting, teaching and writing.



IZTOK LESJAK

Our goal is to build a house for 30,000 euros

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: TPL ARCHIVES



For 22 years now Iztok Lesjak has headed the Technology Park Ljubljana (TP LJ), the biggest innovation ecosystem for the commercialisation of knowledge and technology in Southeast Europe. Through new companies it is spurring the Slovenian economy, creating new jobs, establishing competitive sectors, increasing GDP and dealing with the problems of everyday life.

It would be hard to imagine a more innovative environment and greater generator of all things new. Lesjak is an eternal optimist, who believes firmly in his ideas and who is one hundred percent dedicated to his vision, regardless of what others around him think. Among others awards last year TP LJ received Awards: Best practice, collaboration in regional development, presented as part of the EU Week of Regions and Cities and Development of local ecosystem selected as second best out of 343 projects for the European Enterprise Promotion Award.

Are the Slovenians bold enough to perform on the global market?

I think we are getting increasingly bold, perhaps already super-bold, if you like. Which is a good thing. It is important for younger people not to fear failure. If they don't succeed in one year, they shut down the company and start a new project. But this is an integral part of entrepreneurship.

For society it is good to have as many bold and super-bold people as possible. Entrepreneurship must also be fun, but this is mainly a learning process.

All the same, we are still too much a country of social welfare. And this often does not sit well with entrepreneurship, which requires courage, risk, exploration and boldness. Among the higher years of the University of Ljubljana faculties we recently conducted

a survey, where just 5 percent of students responded that they are thinking about setting up their own company. Of course we want to increase that number, especially since there are dwindling traditional jobs and young people are being forced to seek opportunities in entrepreneurship.

Is entrepreneurship closely linked to the wider state of our society?

Yes, this is very true. If an entrepreneur leaves the country, they take with them all the added value and new jobs. New startups prod the older mastodons to modernise their technology. And we present these new services to them on a plate. TP LJ plays the role of a connector for the flow of people, finance, ideas, resources, innovations. Our principle is primarily collaboration and linking. It is precisely this that our people lack in order to be more competitive and to have constant growth. But sadly we Slovenians are too individualist, and don't work well in teams. Schools should give more encouragement to project work and teamwork, so people can learn this while they are students. I also believe that natural science faculties should apply the concept of entrepreneurship more in study courses, focusing on how to solve a specific problem and test selected solutions in the market.

Those well doing Slovenian firms are working in the fields of entertainment, information and mobile technology, and IT in healthcare.

These are areas that are growing incredibly fast. I think that more and more people will choose those paths, because they will have no other options.

Your community now includes more than 300 companies, and you have been in operation for 22 years. Did you start off with this entrepreneurial focus?

Much less so than today. Like entrepreneurs of that time, we were scared of major risks, but now we are more experienced, so actions are better thought out, but possibly also more audacious.

I am happy that among young people we have spurred the development of a mind-set that it's cool to have your own startup.

We are encouraging young people to get into entrepreneurship through the initiative Inicijativa Startup Slovenija, where we are developing a support environment, assistance schemes and entrepreneurial thinking. The TP LJ has helped to develop at least 500 new high-quality jobs, bringing into the country's funds around 6 million euros annually, and 15 million euros in taxes. This is most certainly one of the best investments financed from the structural funds received in the period of Slovenia progressing to EU membership.

What directions are you focused on at present?

For instance, autologous cells for treating arthritis, which the Slovenian Health Insurance Institute must of course recognise as a new method of treatment. In addition to healthcare, we are specialising in the automation of the working and living environment, and in green technology. All three can be linked, and make up the core of the three pillars of our operation. We are thinking, for instance, about a prototype house that would be sufficiently rich in energy terms, with an energy surplus, and which would be affordable. Our goal is to build a house for 30,000 euros. With the new materials, new construction methods and new energy concepts, it can be done. And it must also be environmentally acceptable. This country adopted the concept of smart specialisation, meaning that we must make what is most natural for us. For the construction we are therefore planning to use wood, along with all the innovations of both Slovenian and foreign companies, in which this country is rich.

The whole world is now recognising the depth of Slovenian innovation and talent, qualities that are the cornerstone of your work.

The majority of people in their most creative period are having to deal with housing loans and how to repay them. Instead of the whole of society enjoying some smart contribution from that person, their talent brings the money to the banks and construction companies building expensive housing. I am firmly against this kind of fleecing of the middle class and enrichment of a minority. I see here a lot of opportunities for smart buildings that would be affordable.

We are also giving a lot of thought to wooden materials, water filtration, improving solar cells, wind generators, logistics, transport and regional development.

In short, I want to link together some dispersed currents and guide them in the right direction.

Are there any barriers to this?

Yes, quite a few. There is still a human resource mismatch between the university and business sectors. The university educates people, but when they get a job in the business sector they are not sufficiently trained. Our mission in society is to bring new developments, and clearly people are sometimes unwilling to accept them.

What about your employees, how do they feel in the workplace?

I can safely say that our employees here are satisfied. The most important thing is that they can totally fulfil their ideas. They have full support and no one is getting in their way. The 15-member team here is not hierarchically led, and I allow everyone to collaborate. Above all we take care of ourselves, we act in a very market-oriented way and we are no one's budget item. We have introduced a lot of our own survival strategies: on our business premises, for instance, we rent out roofs for solar generators, we

get income from the car park, we sell infrastructure made for the market and more besides. It is also important that the employees in the Technology Park and in the firms in our community do not waste time with trips to the post office, the bank, nursery school or doctor, since we have everything here on our doorstep. In short, we are a city in miniature.

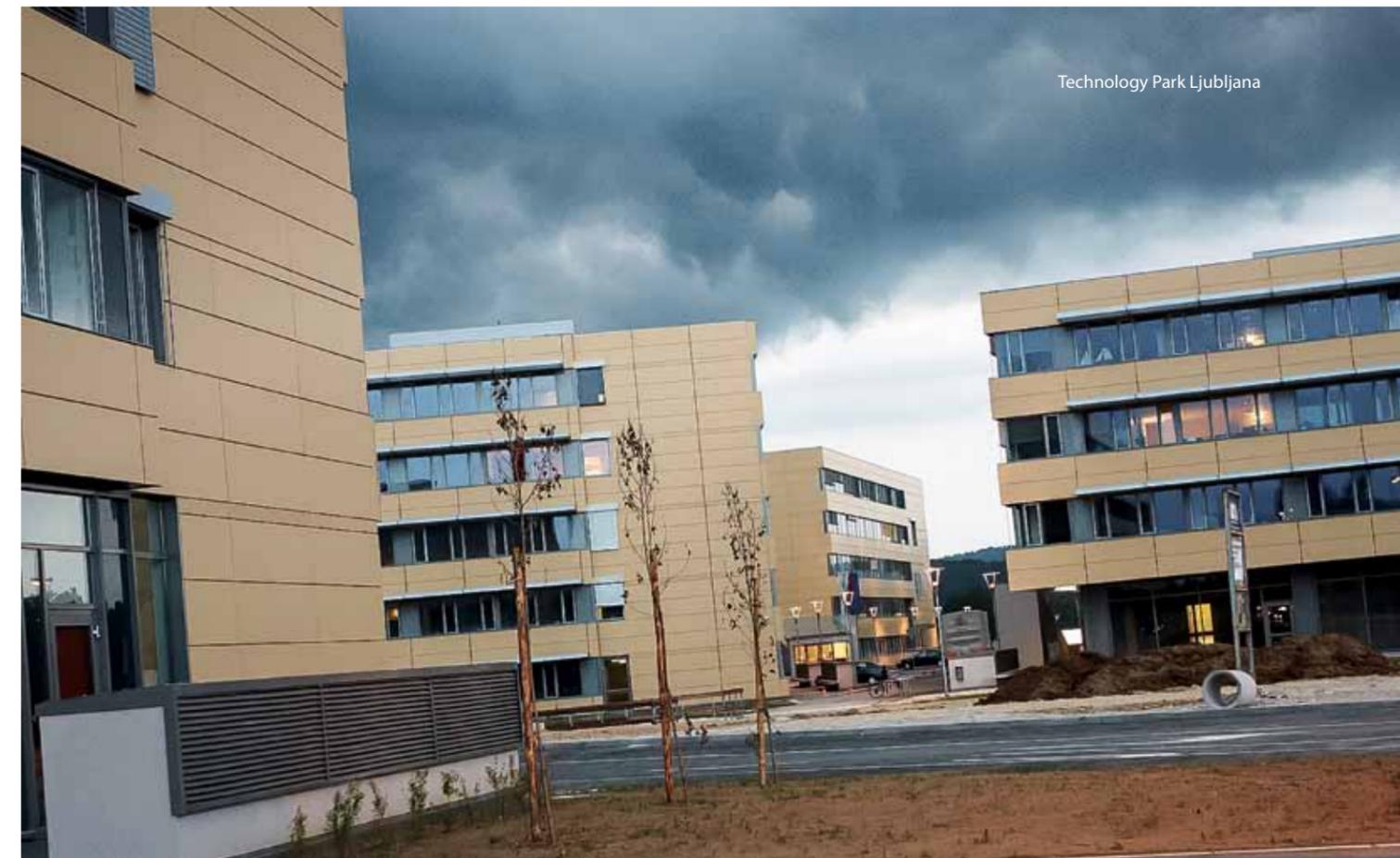
You also like to stress that you are not just advisers.

Yes, that is true. We are exporters of knowledge, we are not advisers but rather co-creators. In Belgrade we are setting up a new technology park and operating in this way. Currently we have 15 projects for which we are being paid by the European Community. In

this we are different from other parks, because we are independent. I am proud that we maintain ourselves, and that we also finance our products entirely on our own. We always work as a team, we link up with buyers and develop the market. This means that we are always studying the needs of the marketplace, looking at problems and seeking solutions. In this we are very multidisciplinary, which is not very common in other technology parks.

What about plans for the future?

I am happy to say that we are planning to expand the Technology Park, including into Stanežiče, so we are seeking an investor. I hope we find one soon.



GAŠPER HRATELJ

OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action

SLOVENIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT



Gašper Hrastelj - National Focal Point for the World OER Congress.
Photo.: Personal Archives

Slovenia is becoming one of the leading countries in the field of Open Educational Resources (OER), hosting the 2nd World OER Congress – OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action, to be held at Cankarjev Dom Congress Centre in Ljubljana, from 18 – 20 September 2017. The event will mark 15 years since the term “Open Educational Resources” was first coined at UNESCO, and five since the inaugural World OER Congress took place, resulting in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration.

OER refer to any educational materials made available under open licenses, to be used and adapted freely for teaching, learning and research purposes.

This is the biggest intergovernmental event being organised in Slovenia in 2017, and it is being put on by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, in cooperation with UNESCO and in partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning, Creative Commons, with the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The main partners in Slovenia are the UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning at the Jožef Stefan Research Institute, and the Cankarjev Dom Congress Centre in Ljubljana.

What do you expect from the Congress?

To bring together government ministers and decision-makers, expert practitioners, researchers and relevant stakeholders. The Congress will build on the outcomes of six regional consultations on OER hosted in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Valletta (Malta), Doha (Qatar), Port Louis (Mauritius), Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Auckland (New Zealand), as organised by the Commonwealth of Learning.

The theme is “OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: from Commitment to Action,” reflecting the role that OER can play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

The Congress itself will address the following objectives: (1) Examine solutions to meeting the challenges of mainstreaming OER practices in education systems worldwide; (2) showcase the world’s best practices in OER policies, initiatives and experts; and (3) provide recommendations for the mainstreaming of OER with links to best practices. We are expecting the participation of more than 300 experts and stakeholders from all over the world, including some Ministers of Education and Higher Education.

What is the importance of this event for Slovenia?

Slovenia is becoming one of the leading countries in the field of

2nd **OER**
World congress

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 18 – 20 September 2017

Open Education and OER. The Slovenian Government made a formal proposal to host the 2nd World OER Congress in Ljubljana, and this was supported and confirmed by UNESCO and the international community – which is an important recognition for the country.

Why was Slovenia chosen as host?

Slovenia provides solutions to the United Nations SDG 4 objective for the Education 2030 Agenda. It is one of the leaders of Open Education worldwide, with the aim of being a “prototype” country that implements this approach on a national level throughout formal and informal education. For instance, the services of Net (www.videlectures.net) were recognized by the UN and UNESCO as an outstanding example of creative and innovative e-content, judged on a global level.

The Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport recently announced the launch of the OpeningUpSlovenia Initiative, what is this?

OpeningUpSlovenia was officially launched during the Open Education Global Conference hosted here, and Slovenia has strategically committed to becoming a reference country for the development and deployment of Open Education.

OpeningUpSlovenia includes various stakeholders in a nationwide initiative to explore and change education using bottom-up policies for our digital age.

This can also be seen in the establishment of a UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning at the Jožef Stefan Research Institute in Ljubljana, and the adoption of the National Strategy 2015-2020 of Open Access to Scientific Publications and Research Data.

NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The Slovenian nation's temple of wisdom

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

Plečnik's work reflects his belief that the mission of architecture is to achieve immortality. NUK, the National and University Library, is without doubt one of Plečnik's most important works.

The National and University Library, whose rich collections include numerous medieval manuscripts, incunabula and Renaissance prints, was built between 1936 and 1941 and is the most important of Plečnik's works in Slovenia. It stands on the site of the former Baroque Princely Palace from the 17th century, which was demolished following the earthquake of 1895.

The exterior of the building bears the influence of Italian palazzos. The design of the distinctive facade with its combination of brick and variously worked stone cladding is modelled on the house of the Roman artist Federico Zuccari.

As the "old" is preserved through knowledge, in Plečnik's temple of wisdom this symbol can be seen in the very appearance of the building. On the exterior, among the apparently random mix of brick and stone, the architect installed some stones from the Baroque Princely Palace which previously stood on the site, and even some Roman building stones that were found during excavation of the library's foundations. In this way Plečnik ensured that the inherited architectural legacy continued to live in the new building.

Plečnik did not conceive of the library as a functional building, but as a temple of wisdom for the Slovenian people. The building keeps copies of all Slovenian books, in other words all the knowledge that the Slovenian nation has been able to create.

Above the side entrance is a bronze statue of Moses, the work of Lojze Dolinar. Alongside the building are indications of the Roman and medieval city walls. The architect had monuments to Slavists placed above the former walls, and in front of the neighbouring national musical institution (Glasbena matica) a series of monuments to Slovenian composers.



The statue of architect Jože Plečnik.
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

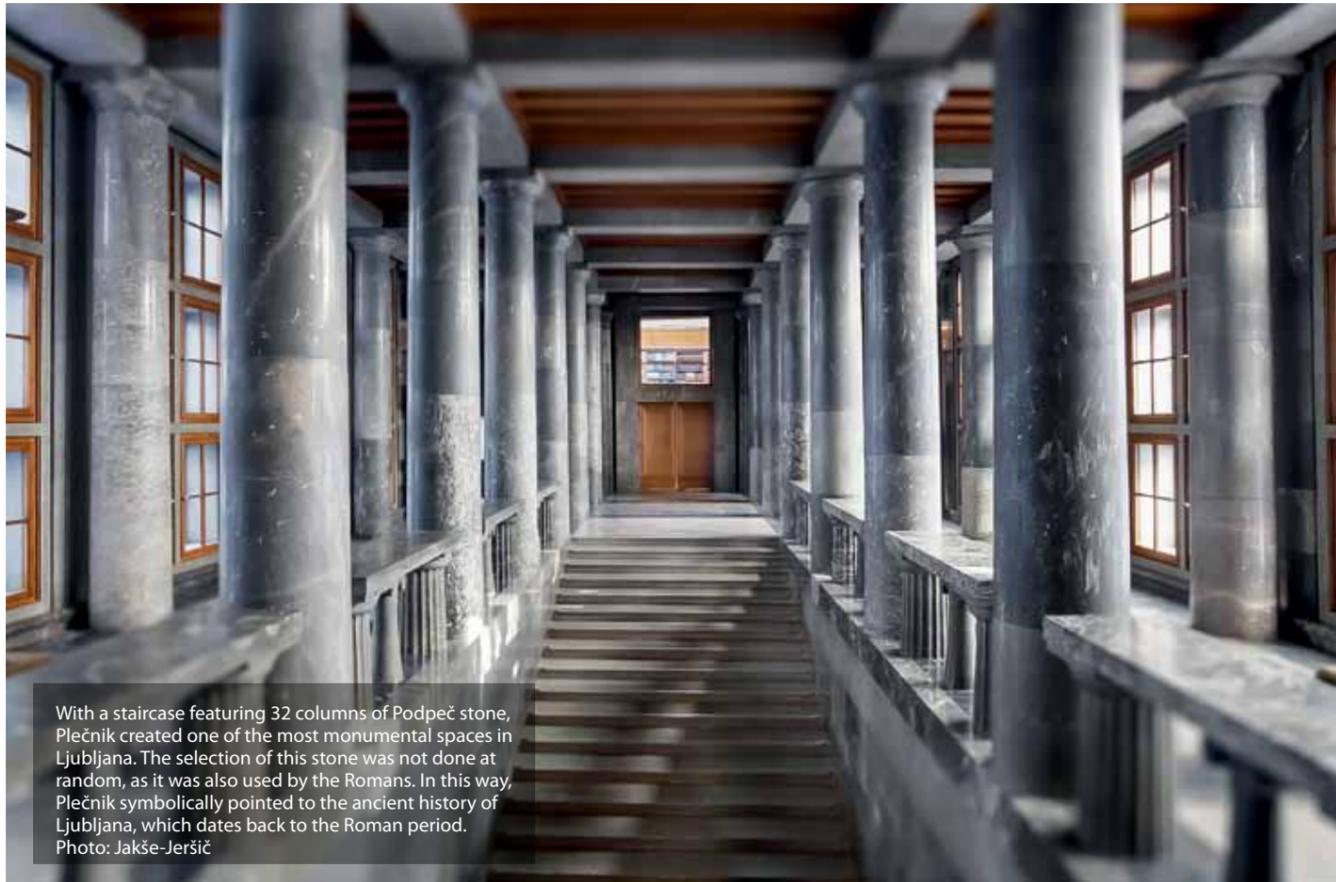
PATH TOWARDS THE LIGHT

The path towards the light is a symbolic path towards wisdom. All of this takes place upon entry into NUK. The entrance to the building is not from the main street, but from a side street.

In this way Plečnik sought to emphasise that knowledge is not handed out at the “main gate”, that it is not accessible to all, but to the dedicated ones who tread the arduous path uphill towards wisdom.

On the main door there is a handle that has been deliberately placed unusually high, as is the high destination that people yearning for wisdom seek to attain. It bears the form of a horse’s head, and this symbol links the profane with the divine; it can traverse between these two states and may also signal a rite of initiation. Pegasus, the winged horse of Antiquity, flew into the heavens to Zeus, and Mohammed flew on a horse into the sky from the rock that stands on the site of what was Solomon’s Temple – today the Al-Aqsa mosque. When those seeking to know more grasp the horse-shaped handle, they are taking a step on the path to knowledge.

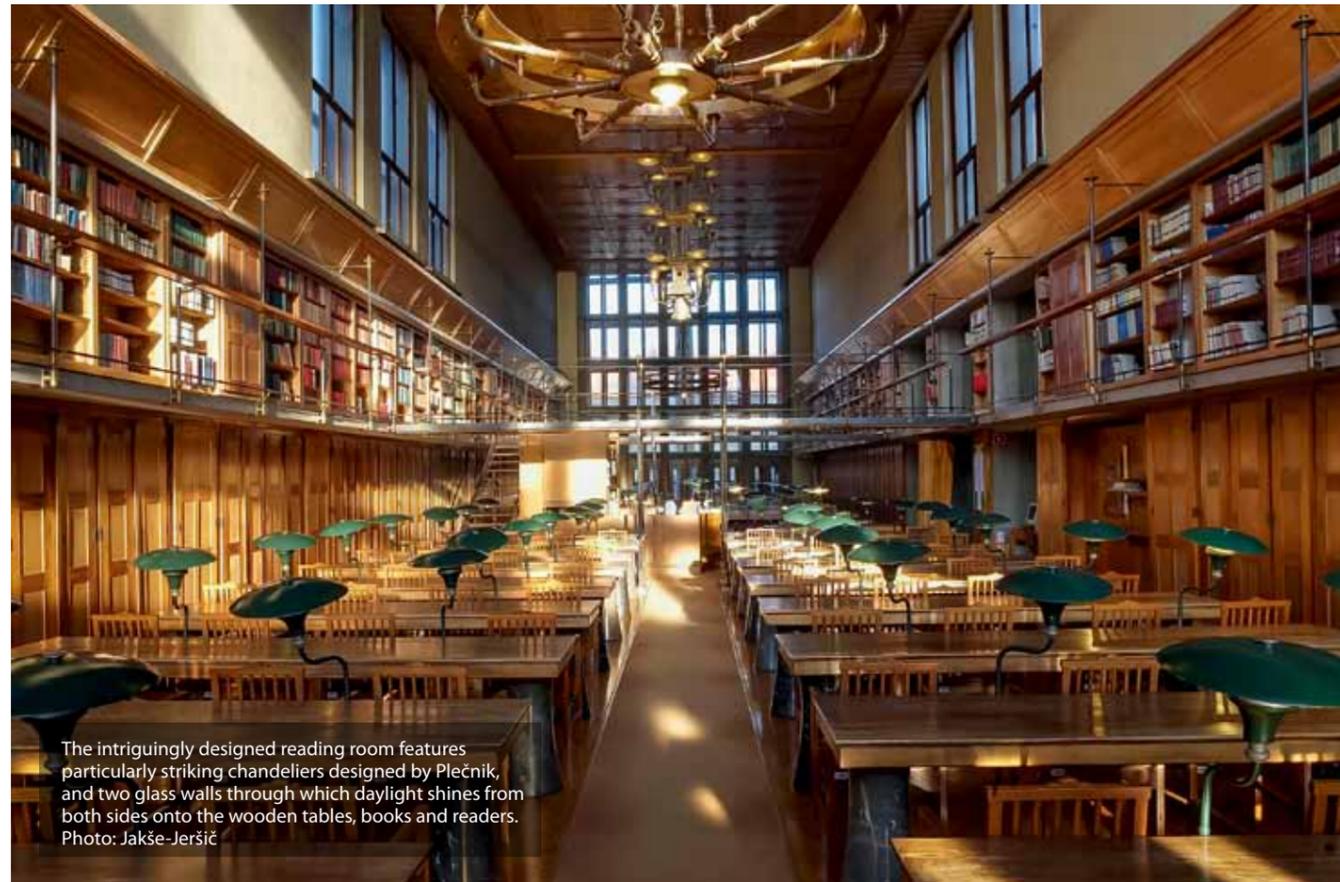
Behind the entrance is a large and wide staircase which rises from the dark towards the door of the reading room, above which the



With a staircase featuring 32 columns of Podpeč stone, Plečnik created one of the most monumental spaces in Ljubljana. The selection of this stone was not done at random, as it was also used by the Romans. In this way, Plečnik symbolically pointed to the ancient history of Ljubljana, which dates back to the Roman period.
Photo: Jakše-Jeršič



With the founding of the first Slovenian university in Ljubljana in 1919, the library also took over the function and duties of the central university library. The library acquired the title University Library of Ljubljana in 1938 in accordance with the University Act and the General University Ordinance. Architect Jože Plečnik made the designs for the new University Library in 1930-31. The library moved into the monumental building close by the university in the spring of 1941. Plečnik’s library is a cultural monument of the highest order. After liberation (in 1945) the university library was also accorded the legal status of the Slovenian national library.



The intriguingly designed reading room features particularly striking chandeliers designed by Plečnik, and two glass walls through which daylight shines from both sides onto the wooden tables, books and readers. Photo: Jakše-Jeršič

window faces south, so the sun may shine through it. The stairs symbolise progress from the dark towards the light. This is a ceremonial path. The staircase is of stone, crowned by imposing columns that symbolise the resolute, unwavering and strong will that is required for advancement.

The entrance to the reading room opens up a new horizon. It is humble, as is learning itself.

There is a monumental door on the upper floor, opposite the main entrance to the reading room. It is formed from a combination of various kinds of wood and stone, and the portal itself is of stone

that stands out in undulating relief from the stone wall. Through this undulation Plečnik's door gives the impression that behind it is an especially important space, although in reality it is simply an ordinary room intended for occasional exhibitions.

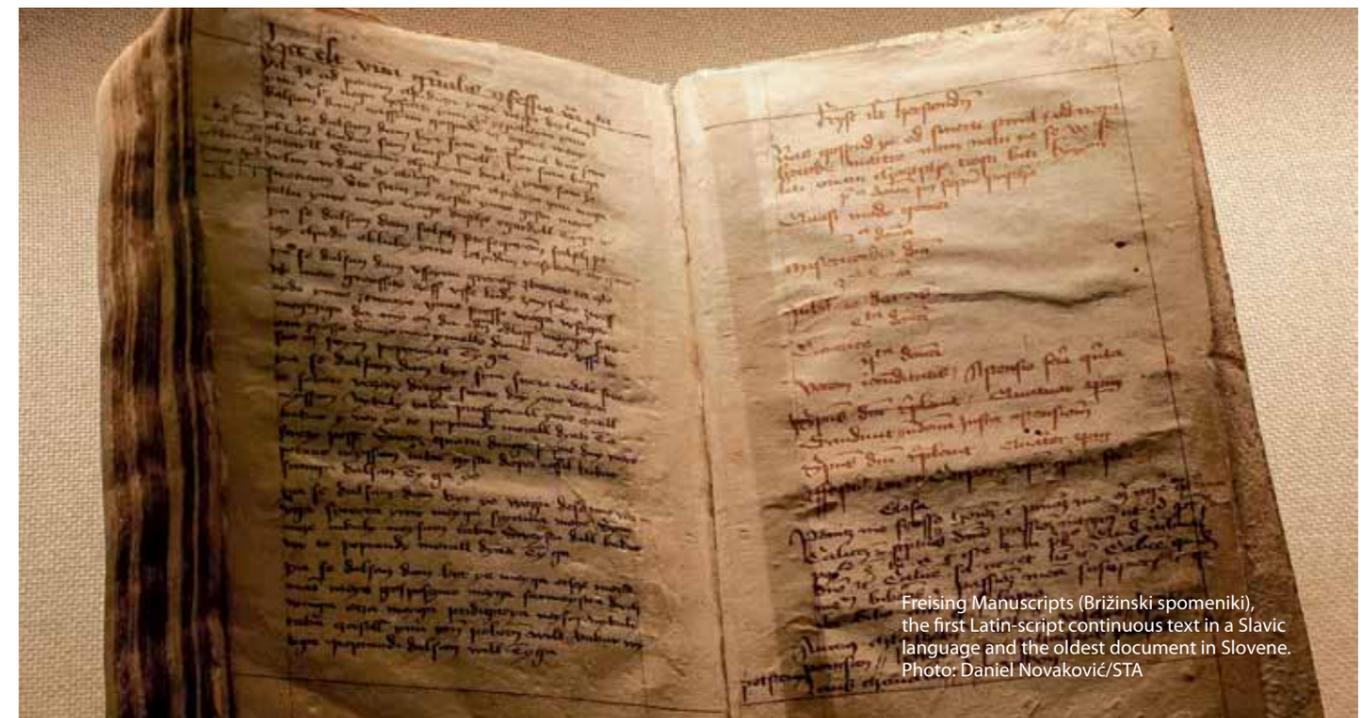
KNOWLEDGE MUST COME WITH MORALS

The use of stone and columns in NUK symbolises the strong will needed for learning, and the solid ethical principles that should prevent the abuse of knowledge.

Only learning brings knowledge, while the true objective is wisdom.

Monumental books kept in the NUK archives

Gregorius Magnus: *Moralia. Ecloga quam scripsit Lathen filius Beith*. 1st half 9th century. Oldest codex in NUK. *Supraselski kodeks (Codex Suprasliensis)*. 1st half 11th century. One of the oldest Slavic linguistic documents, in 2007 it was placed on the UNESCO written heritage list Memory of the World. *Stična Manuscript*. 1st half 15th century. The most important Slovenia medieval manuscript; kept at NUK, it is one of four major Slovenian medieval written documents. *Ain newes lied von den kraynnerischen bauren*. 1515 A leaflet containing the first Slovenian printed words (peasant uprising slogans). Dalmatin, Jurij: *Biblia, tu ie, vse Svetu pismu, Stariga inu Noviga testamta* (The Bible, both Old and New Testaments). 1584. This marks the pinnacle of Slovenian Protestant literature and a unique work along the entire developmental path of Slovenia's cultural history. Valvasor, Janez Vajkard: *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain*. 1689 An dextensive and exhaustive description of the then Duchy of Carniola, and one of the best books of its kind in Europe. Prešeren, France: *Poezije (Poetry)*. 1846 – printer's manuscript, 1847 – three different samples of the same publication: without acrostic, with acrostic and an especially rare edition with a spoilt 9th folio set. The pinnacle of Slovenian poetry, it placed Slovenian literature alongside the contemporary peak of European poetry. Author of Slovenia's national anthem. Trubar, Primož: *Catechismus (Catechism)*. 1555 Second edition of the first Slovenian book from 1550. Cankar, Ivan: *Erotika*. 1899 The first published book by Cankar; Ljubljana Bishop A. B. Jeglič had the unsold copies bought up and burned. Potočnik, Herman: *Das Problem der Befahrung des Weltraums. Der Raketen-Motor*. 1929. This book is regarded as a fundamental work on the technology of space travel.



Freising Manuscripts (Brižinski spomeniki), the first Latin-script continuous text in a Slavic language and the oldest document in Slovene. Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

THE SPIRIT OF THE REFORMATION

Dalmatin New Testament

MANCA G. RENKO
PHOTO: DANIEL NOVAKOVIĆ/STA



This year Slovenia has celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was not important just as a religious movement that changed the nation's predominant Catholic Church, but also because it created a pillar of the national identity, the Slovenian literary language.

The ideas of the Reformation started working their way into the Slovenian lands around 1520, and were adopted mainly by the urban middle class and nobility. One of the noble families that opted for Lutheranism was that of Turjak (the Auerspergs), who demonstrated their adherence to the idea by offering a home and support at their Turjak Castle to *Jurij Dalmatin*, the Reformation literary figure who translated the Bible into Slovenian. Something similar happened to *Martin Luther*, who in 1534, four decades before *Jurij Dalmatin*, translated the Bible into German in the safe refuge of Wartburg Castle. Lutheranism was not just a religious but also a political movement, and it was no coincidence that both Dalmatin and Luther did their translating in the safety of a castle. Religion was indeed often used as a resource by the provincial estates in their struggle against the authority of the provincial rulers. And at least in the Inner Austria provinces, the name for what was then the major part of today's ethnic Slovenian territory, local landowners could get away with it, because the provincial ruler Karl II was politically and financially weakened. When he recovered and established effective defence against the Turks, the expulsion of the Protestant nobility in 1628 saw the final suppression of this religious movement. The significance here is that Lutheran forms of worship were stamped out in the majority of the ethnic Slovenian territory, but the spirit of the Reformation lived on, and Slovenians today are its cultural heirs.

Although Protestantism lasted for less than a century here, it left a strong mark on its surroundings.

Three figures in Slovenia in particular stood out: Primož Trubar, Adam Bohorič and Jurij Dalmatin.

The first of them was the author of the first two printed books in Slovenian, *Catechismus and Abecedarium*, and was the founder of the Slovenian literary language. The second, Adam Bohorič, wrote *Zimske urice (Arcticae horulae succisivae)*, the first Slovenian grammar book, which remained in use for more than 200 years, and was a mentor and teacher for the third great Reformation figure, *Jurij Dalmatin*, who translated the Bible into Slovenian.

UPDATED DALMATIN NEW TESTAMENT

In a year marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, one literary project of major importance has been the modernisation of Dalmatin's translation of the New Testament, a task taken on by Vinko Ošlak and Benjamin Hlastan. In this way the Trubar Forum Association, which facilitated the project, paid homage both to *Jurij Dalmatin* and the Reformation itself. It is hard to imagine today what a challenging task it was for Dalmatin to do his translation, which he completed in 1578. It is important to realise that in the 16th century Dalmatin was not able to attend school or read books in Slovenian, meaning that he had to invent his written language, while at the same time being proficient in Greek, the language on which his translation was based (he also made extensive use of Luther's version, although in places they differ). There were complications not just with the translation but with the printing, too. When Karl II, Archduke and ruler of Inner Austria, heard that Janž Mandelc of Ljubljana was going to print the first Slovenian Bible, the printer was exiled. A search was thus launched in the German states for a printer, and it was only five years later that a one was finally found, in Wittenberg. From there the books were transported in barrels to Inner Austria so they could be read by Slovenians and used by Slovenian preachers.

The updating of the Bible was of course easier than the translation, but was still a daunting task.

Vinko Ošlak and Benjamin Hlastan focused their efforts on using language that could be understood by everyone, while at the same time preserving the rhythm and flavour of the Dalmatin original.

The Slovenian Reformation figures worked to spread the word of God among the people and make it accessible to all. The same is true of the updated Dalmatin Bible, which has been printed in 50,000 copies and will be available free of charge. This is also part of the Reformation heritage.

20TH FESTIVAL OF SLOVENIAN FILM

Overview of selected Slovenian film production

ULA UKMAR

Portorož
Portorose

12.–16.9
2017

20.
Festival
Slovenskega
Filma

Festival del
cinema sloveno

At the beginning of September, Portorož will host the special anniversary Festival of Slovenian Film, which offers an overview each year of selected Slovenian production of feature, documentary and animated films of all lengths. As befits a round number this year's Festival will be something special.

Visitors will get to enjoy watching films outdoors, right on the beach at Portorož. Audio-visual art enthusiasts, from creators to aficionados of film and the representatives of the "Seventh Art" will be able to view the rich selection of films from the past year in the Amphitheatre, the summer covered venue, and the main hall of Portorož Auditorium.

The Festival of Slovenian Film (FSF) could be described as the successor to the Week of Domestic Film, which took place in the 1970s in Celje. Following independence, the event was renamed the Slovenian Film Marathon, and 20 years ago, in 1998, it became a festival of national importance, was renamed the Festival of Slovenian Film, and moved to Portorož. In the early years it took place at different times of the year, from April right up to November, but finally found its rightful place at the beginning of September, when the summer season is drawing to a close, but the sunny days and warm sea still attract people to the coast, ensuring not just a viewing of the best films of the past year, but also numerous accompanying events.

RICH FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

The main event of the overview of Slovenian audio-visual production – the Festival of Slovenian Film – has long since departed from its format of a film marathon, or more precisely an overview of the entire national film production each year, and focused instead on a select competition and overview programme that still offers a comprehensive yet select repertoire of local features and shorts.

Over the years, it evolved from a screening event into a meeting of creative people and the profession, which is a side activity for all film festivals.

Each year the accompanying festival events play an important part in the local film industry, rather like the Olympic Games in Ancient Greek society. This is a period of peace, when old insults and feuds are forgotten, and regardless of the differences (aesthetic or ideological) between us, and regardless that this is also a

competition, everyone sits down together before the film screen and surrenders to the Seventh Art. The purpose of provoking passions, fierce debate and ground-breaking views is one and the same for all participants – to stimulate high-quality work in this field. This is a time when filmmakers offer each other the respect and praise they expect for themselves; and ultimately this is a time when it is right to recall and bring to awareness the undoubted truth that only together, and in a spirit of solidarity, can we move mountains for the benefit of film art.

The audio-visual event, the meeting of filmmakers, film professionals and visitors, with its rich accompanying programme running throughout the Festival, will this year present new film works by already established Slovenian directors as well as younger filmmakers – Boris Jurjaševič, Marko Naberšnik, Jan Cvitkovič, Hana Slak, Rok Biček, Matjaž Ivanišin, Boštjan Slatenšek and numerous others.

Like every year, the Festival will also involve the presentation of the top Slovenian professional award in the area of film, the Metod Badjura Prize, which is awarded by the Association of Slovenian Filmmakers for the recipient's life work in film, and has been presented since the Festival began.

The Vesna, which is the highest national award for achievements in film art awarded each year by the expert jury, has been presented since 2001, and this year Vesna represents the central figure of the Festival's visual image.

In addition to numerous selected works of audio-visual production, this year's special anniversary Festival will be enhanced by the extensive and far-ranging accompanying programme, and by outdoor screenings, which will take place right on the beach at Portorož. So this year's Festival of Slovenian Film will serve especially to bring together all those who love film art, from viewers to makers, and enliven events on the Slovenian coast, as well as drawing in a large number of Slovenian and foreign guests.

SLOVENIAN MUSICALS

Early days, but inspiring and varied

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

Meta (Nina Pušlar) and Janez (Matjaž Robavs)
Photo: Musical Cvetje v jeseni Archives

Over the last few years Slovenian audiences have been captivated by the musicals *Cvetje v jeseni* (*Flowers in Autumn*), *Vesna* and *Veronika Deseniška*. These are notable as the first Slovenian musicals, at least one of which has definitely been seen by every Slovenian.

All three musicals are all love stories, but are placed in very different settings. A farm environment and the love of homeland, spring awakening and first youthful love, and the love of a girl who sacrifices herself for her love and the people.

PROFESSING LOVE FOR THE HOMELAND

At centre stage of the musical *Cvetje v jeseni* is the love story between the city lawyer Janez and the farm girl Meta, who dies in his arms when he courts her love.

Although the tale of *Cvetje v jeseni*, which was written by Ivan Tavčar, is essentially a love story, it also has a dimension of national consciousness – professing a love of the homeland.

Ivan Tavčar's work is therefore not merely a literary idealisation of rustic folk as the guardians of the Slovenian language and tradition; it can also be read as an idiosyncratic appeal for an awakening of national consciousness, an appeal for reconciliation and connection among Slovenians. The novel *Cvetje v jeseni* is also important in ethnological terms. In it, as in the musical, there are precise descriptions of farm tasks, village courtship, dance and singing, thus showing the essence of being Slovenian in this context.

The life and spirit written into the novel provides an excellent basis for the musical. Meta is a shy, but happy and genuine girl, with a wonderful heart capable of pure love. She also dies for love, living it

and embodying it to the full. Janez respects her and is himself a big-hearted man who gives precedence to the goodness and honesty of a woman, and not to her refinement, education, popularity or status. He is also prepared to change his way of life for Meta, and after she dies he holds her in loving memory as irreplaceable.

The musical features more than 20 songs, of which the majority are original, while some were drawn by the creative team from the treasury of Slovenian folk music. It has been sung and acted by 18 performers, with the accompaniment of a symphony orchestra conducted by Simon Dvoršak. Choreographer Miha Krušič linked traditional Slovenian dances to the modern day. Of the dance scenes, one of the finest is the presentation of the mowers and the power of love. The role of Janez is played by the opera soloist Matjaž Robavs, alternating with Domen Križaj, while Meta is portrayed by pop singer Nina Pušlar and the actress Maja Martina Merljak.

SLOVENIAN ROMEO AND JULIET

The musical *Veronika Deseniška* (*Veronika of Desenice*) is a production built on a tragedy, and a story based on historical facts.

The tale of *Veronika Deseniška* and the married Friderik II of Celje is Slovenia's own Romeo and Juliet, and ranks as one of the finest Slovenian epics.

Veronika Deseniška was supposedly born around 1380, and was the second wife of Friderik II of Celje (the wedding was thought to have

been in 1424 or 1425). The trial of Veronika Deseniška was the first recorded witchcraft trial in Slovenia. She was killed by drowning at some time between 1425 and 1427, although there is no precise information on the events.

At the forefront of the production is the love between the unhappily married Friderik and the charismatic noblewoman of a lesser house, Veronika Deseniška. A random meeting between them sparks an affinity which develops into love. Friderik's wife Elizabeta Frankopanska is aware of their relationship, and she brings Veronika to the princely court as her lady-in-waiting. Since the girl has increasingly captured the attention of her husband, Elizabeta resorts to poison. She calls for Veronika and offers her two cups, in one of which is poison, saying that she will drink whichever one the girl doesn't. Ve-

ronika survives, but Elizabeta dies. Her death enrages the family, with which the Count of Celje, Herman II (Friderik's father) has already had tense relations for some time. He accuses Veronika of witchcraft, but upon her touching speech he pardons her. Yet Herman nevertheless persists in the belief that Veronika should be punished. Veronika ultimately admits guilt only to save Desenice and its inhabitants from ruin. She is drowned at the hands of the knight Jošt.

Appearing in the main roles are: Eva Černe and Biba Novak (Veronika Deseniška), Klemen Bunderle and Srđan Milovanović (Friderik II of Celje), Marjan Bunič and Matija Bizjan (Herman II of Celje) and Željka Predojevič and Maša Tiselj (Elizabeta Frankopanska). The music was composed by Leon Firšt.

The backdrop to the musical Veronika Deseniška is the Old Castle of Celje, the tallest medieval fortification in Slovenia. It is a story of the struggle for power, political intrigues, popular uprisings and the immortal love of Veronika and Friderik. Photo: Rok Deželak



SPRING IN THE SIGNS OF LOVE

In contrast to *Cvetje v jeseni* (Flowers in Autumn), the musical *Vesna* is a light and entertaining story created out of the 1950s film hit *Vesna*, made in the golden age of Hollywood. It is a tale of school-leavers, spring and love. The story takes place along a Ljubljana street called *Letališka cesta* (Airport Street), where there was once indeed an airfield. In spring, when the sunshine starts to sparkle, when nature dresses itself in seductive colours and love is in the air, the school-leavers are forced to bury their heads in their books and cram for exams. But our three heroes, Samo, Krištof and Sandi, are sure there is an easier way to succeed in the exams. They come up with a short cut involving *Hyperbola*, the daughter of their strict maths teacher, Professor Cosine. The formula they concoct is, win the heart of *Hyperbola*, and then get their hands on the exam papers. But what happens if our three bright sparks put the wrong unknown into their equation?

The girl who turns up for the date isn't the girl they thought was the teacher's daughter. The consequences of this sweet error are the thread from which the story of *Vesna* – adapted from director František Čap's romantic comedy – is woven.

The script for the musical *Vesna*, which follows the story of the Slovenian film, was written by Janez Usenik. The musical includes 24 original compositions. It is choreographed by Miha Krušič. The main roles are played by Flora Ema Lotrič (*Vesna*), Robert Korošec alternating with Klemen Bunderla (*Samo*), Boštjan Korošec (*Sandi*) and Srđjan Milovanović (*Krištof*). The director is Vojko Anzeljč, and the music composed by Matjaž Vlašič.



The film *Vesna* (1953), which inspired the musical, was special since it was about the urban middle class, it was light and had no ideological charge. The story of the film centres around the coincidence that school-leaving exams are in spring, when love is in the air. In some Slavic languages *Vesna* means spring. In this romantic tale, the goddess of spring is a girl with whom one of the young men falls in love. Photo: Ljubljana Festival Archives

SLOVENIA AS LITERARY TRANSIT CAFÉ

Too lovely for a murder, a model for Dante's inferno and much more

MANCA G. RENKO



Everyone has heard of the Café de Flore in Paris or the Café Central in Vienna, coffeehouses frequented by the literary and intellectual elite which took on legendary status. We also know of cities that gained their own literary maps, be it Dublin through James Joyce or Prague through Franz Kafka.

Writers have never found Ljubljana quite as alluring as freedom-promising Paris, but in passing, almost unnoticed, quite a few have stayed here, shaping literary and humanist thinking both here and abroad.

This land, which more than not has been visited just in passing, has been preserved in memory as too lovely for a murder, then on the other hand as hell itself, and its inhabitants were at one time “decomposing geniuses” and another the girls had the faces of a “peasant Virgin Mary.”

AGATHA CHRISTIE IN BOHINJ: “TOO LOVELY FOR A MURDER”

It is perhaps no coincidence that the queen of crime thrillers, Agatha Christie, holidayed right in Bohinj, which this year became the setting for what is in many people's opinion the best Slovenian crime novel, *The Lake (Jezero)* by Tadej Golob. Christie was on holiday in Slovenia in 1967, and today you can still see her room (no. 204) in the crumbling Hotel Bellevue. But if you want to sleep in the hotel, you'll need to wait a few years; just this year it was acquired by new owners, who promise that it will be renovated in keeping with the cultural and natural heritage surrounding it. Meanwhile in Bohinj you will encounter much less fear than in reading Agatha Christie, as all you will face is unspoiled nature and the crystal-clear lake. Or as Ms Christie herself said:

“It's too lovely here for a murder.”

ERNEST HEMINGWAY IN KOBARID: “LITERATURE MORE CONVINCING THAN REALITY”

Despite the military exploits of the aforementioned Svetozar Borojević on the Isonzo (Soča) Front, people have taken less note of the Field Marshal and much more of the writer Ernest Hemingway, who supposedly fought in the battlefields there and immortalised his experiences in the novel *A Farewell to Arms*. With this the little town of Kobarid rose to world fame, although from the description in the book it appears in truth to be about the town of Kanal ob Soči (in any event we recommend visiting both, and in the summer months you simply have to bathe in the emerald Soča!) Yet since literature is not reality, it turned out later that Hemingway did not actually fight here, for he only arrived in Europe in May 1918, and in July of the same year was wounded on the River Piave and ended up in a hospital in Milan.

It seems that Hemingway wrote his novel from a mixture of foggy memories and long talks with other wounded men, who had been on the front for longer than him,

but he noted everything so convincingly that today many still believe that he must have seen everything with his own eyes. To be completely convinced, all we would need is a film by Woody Allen, which in the style of *Midnight in Paris* would show that truth and fiction are so interwoven that there is nothing wrong in believing everything, as long as it is sufficiently beautiful.

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI IN IDRİJA: "TOUCH THE IDRİJCA"

The majority of Slovenians know Idrija as the second largest mercury mine in the world, which also earned a place on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Apart from the mine, which you can still tour today in this darkly picturesque location, something else of note took place here: the Italian poet, writer and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, one of the icons of 20th century art, attended the fourth grade of primary school here between 1930 and 1931. It is hard to assess how strong an impact that year in Idrija had on Pasolini, but if you visit Idrija, you will see that it is not a place you can easily forget. Pasolini himself mentioned the banks of the River Idrija in a poem in 1941, where he addresses himself as a young man, saying:

Touch the Idrijca/ the banks lost in dreams of memory,/ bitter from the cries of my boyhood.

SIGMUND FREUD IN ŠKOCJAN CAVES: "A MODEL FOR DANTE'S INFERNO"

Over the Easter holiday of 1898, the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and his brother Alexander found themselves in Škocjan Caves, which are now protected as part of the UNESCO Natural Heritage List. It was not just the natural beauty that made a strong impression on him, it was also the guide, a "decomposing genius" as he described him in a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess. The guide spoke of the caves as "holes," which persuaded Freud that the man was a neurotic, and his caving ex-

ploits an erotic substitution. He was ultimately convinced of this when the guide stated that it was the same with caves as with maidens: "the deeper you go, the better it is." Freud supposedly left him a hefty tip, so that he could "drink himself to death as soon as possible." But apart from this spelunker, one Gregor Žiberna, in the caves Freud also met with a more important character from his own city, the Mayor of Vienna Dr Karl Lueger. He was one of the first professional anti-Semites, on whom Hitler modelled himself, as stated in his *Mein Kampf*. A Viennese Jew, in the jaws of the cave Sigmund Freud had encountered the most prominent of the Viennese anti-Semites, a man whom he roundly despised.

If Dante had seen something similar he would have had an easy job composing Inferno," noted Freud.

Such an impression was inspired by the breath-taking backdrop and also without doubt by his hellish encounter.

JAMES JOYCE IN LJUBLJANA: "DOBER DAN!"

Six years after Freud was in Škocjan, the Slovenian lands offered a sojourn to another giant, this time of modernist literature, James Joyce. In October 1906, he and his wife Nora

alighted from a train at the Ljubljana station. He was on his way to Trieste, and thought the train had already arrived at its destination. They paid for their error with a night spent in a park, where today a small memorial close to the station commemorates the event. If you would like to see a somewhat larger memorial, from the railway station you can make the hour-long journey to Trieste, where Joyce spent 15 years of his life, earning his livelihood by teaching English, and then you could go on to *Duino Castle*, where Rainer Maria Rilke composed his *Duino Elegies*. If you are feeling more adventurous, you can go all the way up to Opčine (Villa Opicina), a village with a majority Slovenian population on the edge of the Karst Plateau above Trieste, where there is a study that was used by Richard Francis Burton, a diplomat who made the first translation of the *Kama Sutra*, and who found Trieste too dull for work, so he preferred to venture into the hills amid the "friendly semi-savages," as the Trieste Slavic population was described by Stendhal, himself also on a mission in Trieste in 1830.

Whether Joyce came across the greeting "dober dan" (good day) in Finnegans Wake in Ljubljana or Trieste, we do not know, but the use of Slovenian words in this book is something that every Slovenian school-child knows.

ROBERT MUSIL IN POSTOJNA: SLOVENIAN VILLAGE FUNERAL

Sigmund Freud was not the only Austrian to loiter in the vicinity of Slovenia's caves; his contemporary and fellow Viennese Robert Musil, whose monumental novel *The Man Without Qualities* can be compared to Joyce's *Ulysses*, was in Postojna in 1917 as a member of the Imperial Austrian Army. He performed clerical duties for Field Marshal Svetozar Borojević, who later wrote himself into the history books as the supreme commander of the Soča (Isonzo) Front, and while serving there he observed the world around him. This observation yielded the story entitled *Slovenian Village Funeral*, in which we can recognise local faces;

for instance a girl, who in keeping with the eternal ideal of Slovenian rural beauty had "made up her face in naive pink, so her visage was identical to that of the peasant Virgin Mary in the church."

Postojna Cave is almost the same as it was in Musil's time, and if you look closely into the faces of the girls, you will certainly encounter one that matches the writer's description.



Idrija.
Photo: Dunja Wedam



Divača Cave.
Photo: STO Archives

SLOVENIA SHOWS OFF POCKET-SIZED GREEN DIVERSITY ON INSTAGRAM

Influential Instagrammers explored the beauty of Slovenia and were enthralled

STB GLOBAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
PHOTO: STB ARCHIVES



Early in July, the Slovenian Tourist Board hosted eight world famous Instagram influencers, whose breath-taking profiles have almost three million followers. With most of them being in Slovenia for the first time, they were impressed with the diversity of the landscape in such a small area.

Slovenia has become the world's first country to be declared a green destination, based on an assessment by the Dutch organisation Green Destinations. The Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) thus wants to communicate Slovenia's diversity on international level, and since social networks are a powerful tool for market communication, working with Instagram seemed like a perfect opportunity.

The main advantage of such social media is that it gives the feeling of authenticity, as it communicates user experiences.

Moreover, there is usually a real person behind the profile, someone that you can connect with or whose aesthetic or opinion inspires others. Instagram has a distinctly visual approach to social media, and allows you to tag the locations where photos were taken. This is obviously very useful for promoting destinations. For these reasons, STB recognises the power of social networks, and is thus devoting much attention to this area. At the same time, STB is also putting considerable efforts into finding high-quality digital influencers, who can help to promote Slovenia as an attractive and photogenic destination.

A POWERFUL COMMUNICATION TOOL ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

In July, the beauties of Slovenia were discovered by a group of Instagrammers regarded as among the most influential on this social network.



Eva was taken with Jasna Lake:

"I'm happy with small things like mountains and fresh air. I could just sit here for the rest of the week and watch how the day turns into a night. This country is unreal." #ifeelsLOVEnia @feelslovenia

These were Eeva Makinen and Daniel Taipale from Finland, Johannes Becker and Daniel Ernst from Germany, Ben Prescott and Andrea Ference from Canada, and Michael Matti and Jessica Dales from the USA.

The key fact is that these Instagrammers have followers throughout the world, and not just in the countries where they come from,

so this campaign was important in international terms and reached many followers from around the globe.

WHERE THEY WENT TO

Eeva, Johannes and the two Daniels explored the Julian Alps, while Ben, Jessica, Andrea and Michael travelled right across Slovenia. They spent their first night at Krvavec, and climbed to the very top of this popular sports centre to catch the best possible light before the sunrise. They continued their journey towards Kamnik, where they divided into two groups. Ben and Jessica went to Velika



Daniel Ernst could not help but be amazed by the natural beauty of Slovenia when he toured Triglav National Park, Bled and Bohinj and the Soča river valley. About the Soča he wrote: "Narrow winding gorges with unreal blue water - that's Soča Valley! One of the places that impressed me most on our tour in Slovenia." #ifeelsLOVEnia @feelslovenia #ad



Michael Matti could not believe that such a small country could be so varied: "It's been a whirlwind four days in Slovenia so far. We've been in the mountains, in the countryside, on the coast, and in wine country. It's amazing how many different types of landscapes are in such a small area."

planina, where they slept in a mountain hut, and then continued towards Logar Valley and Podpeca, where they kayaked in an underground mine. They spent their evening in Celje, and continued exploring the eastern part of Slovenia. They visit Pohorje and Ptuj, focusing on the natural highlights of the area.

Michael and Andrea went to Dolenjska region, where they started their day with a breakfast on the canoe, waiting for the sun to

rise. Their tour included a visit to the UNESCO recognized Škocjan Caves, as well as Postojna Cave, which Michael described as among the unique places in the world. They spent their evening in the coastal town of Piran and in the Sečovelje salt pans.

Afterwards, all four of the Instagrammers met in Kranjska Gora, and continued towards Soča Valley. Their journey ended in Ljubljana, the green capital of Slovenia.



Ben Prescott would live on Velika Planina
Regarding his experience of Velika Planina he wrote: "Early morning up on the planina, Kamnik alps region watching the whole world wake up. The name 'velika planina' translates literally from Slovenian to English as 'great mountain' - a fitting name for an alpine village. And a summary of my ideal place to live."

Jessica Dales was astonished by Logar Valley, "Chasing light in Logar Valley," and Slovenia in general: "When I was planning this trip to Slovenia I knew that there were stunning mountains, a famous castle adorned lake, and lots of cream cake. What I could never have prepared myself for was the colour of the water here. Even if I'd seen pictures, I don't think I would have believed it - crystal clear and brilliant turquoise." @ifeelslovenia #ifeelsLOVEnia



Daniel Taipale posted photos of Lakes Bohinj and Bled, and of the mountains Triglav and Mangart on his Instagram account: "This place is beyond amazing and I cannot wait to share more highlights of our trip with you guys." #ifeelsLOVEnia @ifeelslovenia #ad

EKO HOTEL ST. DANIEL

An integrated and nature-friendly boutique approach

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

The St. Daniel Hotel is a lovely quiet, friendly place to stop over for a couple of nights and explore the wonderful Karst region.
Photo: Ana Rojc



For a long time the nutritionist and bioresonance therapist Nina Abramič, along with sculptor and restorer Miran Prodnik, felt they wanted to leave behind the urban routine of constant rushing and stress, and so they decided to make a change to their lives.

“On listening to the Solfeggio frequencies – the ancient six-tone scale used in sacred music and Gregorian chants – we awakened the primary and instinctive feelings we carry in ourselves without being aware of them,” they say in explaining their philosophy.

“We sensed them more than heard them, and a primal force led us in a precise direction, as if returning to a home we no longer recognised. To a place where time goes slowly, almost stops, and there is enough for you to take some for yourself, to pop over to your neighbour for coffee and a chat, a place where shopping in the store in the neighbouring village becomes an event, and the afternoon siesta is an essential part of the day.” They were thus drawn to the Karst village of Hruševica, just a kilometre from Štanjel, and there they found an old Karst house in need of repair. And with true Karst stubbornness, the couple did not take the architect’s advice to forget about renovations, because it would not be worth it. Instead, they were convinced that it would be possible to set up the hotel they were dreaming about. After three years of hard work on renovations and construction, their dream came true. Finally they opened the doors of their family eco hotel, which they call St. Daniel – a name derived from the place name, Štanjel.

Their guiding concept was simple – an integrated and nature-friendly boutique approach.

Nina and Miran have themselves been living by these principles for some years, so the decision to take this new business path was entirely logical. They experience the Karst as a wonderful area that will not sustain mass tourism. “We fell in love with this landscape,

and all in all there could have been no other outcome,” they say as one. They found support in the international Bio Hotels chain, which has seen much success in Austria and Germany with regard to the growth of ecological tourism. “We joined the chain, and they helped us a lot with advice and the rules we need to follow.” Today their main wish is for their guests to experience the Karst with body, mind, heart and spirit. To live a little with it, to immerse themselves in the Karst history and landscape, and all its gifts.

FUSION OF ECOLOGY AND ALL THINGS KARST

In the new hotel everything is ecological or organic – the food and drink, furniture, the heating system and the approach of the hosts, who also offer therapeutic services. There are in fact strict criteria that must be met to obtain a Bio Hotels certificate, along with equally strict conditions for pursuing a business. These do not just cover the construction materials and furnishings, or the issues of saving water and energy and waste management, but also the provision of organic food and drink, which must be certified as organic produce or products. In private the couple are also advocates of healthy living, and the use ingredients that are organic and locally produced. “Organic food is not just important to us for health reasons, but as a message about our commitment to the principles of fair trade and environmental responsibility. Everything conjured up in the kitchen by our outstanding chef Borut Jakič is a living original signature of the fusion of the traditional and modern, of what is organic, healthy and mainly from the Karst,” they explain. In ecological terms, this means that you try to make the supply chain as short as possible, so there are the least number of intermediaries between the farmer and consumer. Organic food also has no additives, artificial flavours, colouring or flavour enhancers.

A DISTINCT LACK OF CHEFS, WAITERS, ORGANIC VINTNERS AND STONEMASONS

Despite relatively high levels of youth unemployment, top restaurants in Slovenia still have a lot of trouble sourcing good chefs and waiters, and this holds true for Nina and Miran. "At one time the occupation of a chef was undervalued, and young people would choose grammar school instead of vocational school, so this created a vacuum, and a lack of skilled staff that is today much in demand. And we are now paying the price for this." However, the couple believe in pursuing the right vision, and that this is followed by the right things happening, that nothing can be forced, and that all things come in time. "So just like that one of the best Slovenian chefs, Jakič, came knocking on the door. He had sensed that together we could do something good. Just like now we are bringing native cultures back into our lives, we can see the gradual return of those vocations which had almost disappeared and died out. But

there are still some problems. For example, it was hard for us to find a stonemason to work on the renovations, or any craftsman who knew how to stencil patterns on a wall."

OLD KARST KITCHEN BROUGHT TO MODERN LIFE

You have to try the *pršut* (prosciutto) and olives in the Karst region, of course, and the couple's menu also offers cod, celery, potato soup, Brussels sprout rolls, sage risotto, various gnocchi and cheeses, from those matured in wine press residue to juniper and ash-coated cheeses, stewed beef, fried veal tail, sardines, lamb's lettuce and courgettes, fennel risotto, pork tenderloin, celery with sautéed buckwheat, roast chicken in white wine, beet gnocchi, cod and potatoes, Škapin cheeses and lots of Teran-based and other sweet snacks. In selecting dishes for the menu, along with the actual recipes, Nina and Miran had a lot of help from the leading expert in Karst cuisine, Vesna Guštin.

As they explained, "We work with the top suppliers of organic food and drink, and together we create a version of old Karst cuisine transformed into something of the present day."

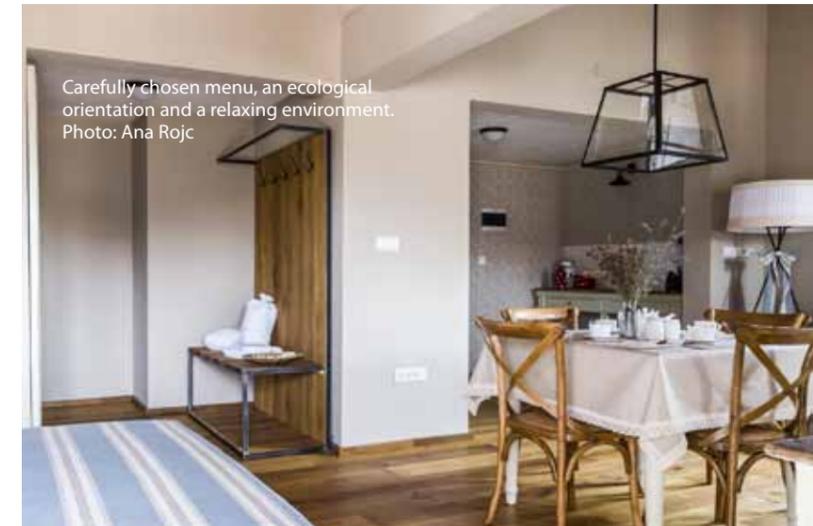
EXCLUSIVELY ORGANIC WINE

The sommelier at the hotel has also put together a wine list that features only organic wine makers. These include bottles from Guerila, Burja, Batič and Pasji rep from the Vipava Valley, Štekar, Movia and Reja of Goriška brda, and the cellars of Korenika & Moškon, Rodica and Rojac from Slovenian Istria.

A good wine selection is of course the cornerstone of any restaurant, but at the Hotel St. Daniel they have also added a water list. "We often forget about those people who are conscious of the importance of drinking high-quality water. It is precisely for those that we decided to carry a large selection of mineral and natural water, both domestic and foreign, under the slogan: different water for different people," they explain.

Being an ecological hotel also means that they kindly ask guests to turn out the lights when leaving a room, not to run water in unlimited quantities, and to behave as respectfully as possible to all the elements of nature they encounter during their stay.

They themselves have worked to ensure that in the planning and construction of their hotel they have been as nature-friendly as possible. They provide heating by means of a heat pump, all the furniture is made from recycled materials, with the furniture and parquet being unvarnished and just sealed with linseed oil or beeswax, while their laundry provides environmentally-friendly cleaning and drying services. In the kitchen, they are especially careful to create as little waste as possible, and to use as much of each ingredient as they can. "The essence of our kitchen lies in organic and naturally ripened foods from the local environment, and we continuously adapt the menu to the wishes of our guests, as well as the conditions and produce that nature bestows on us in any given season." Next to the house is an herb garden laid out in the mo-



Carefully chosen menu, an ecological orientation and a relaxing environment.
Photo: Ana Rojc

nastic style, which means that the herbs are planted painstakingly and to a specific plan. The house is adorned with photographs of the famous and unknown, with Nina and Miran explaining that the only difference between them is that the unknown people did not have the chance to become famous.

DEEP SEARCH FOR PERSONAL HARMONY

The hotel also offers various anti-stress and invigorating programmes, such as relaxing in herbal, Finnish or full-spectrum saunas, or cleansing in a special hydrotherapy chamber. Guests can also make use of carbon fibre bikes to discover the Karst landscape and experience it with more of their senses. The hotel can accommodate 22 guests in two rooms, three suites and apartments.

The rooms are harmonised to the Solfeggio frequencies and named Love, Youth, Joy, Change, Miracle, Connection, Balance and Consciousness.

"These original tones of oneness encourage a deep search for personal harmony, they are part of the universe and as such are timeless and divine," the couple say, summing up their understanding of life, as now realized in their work.



Hotel St. Daniel has won a Slovenia Green Accommodation award. In the photo: The owners of the hotel, Nina Ambramič and Miran Prodnik, along with their daughter, in the company of Director of Slovenian Tourist Board Maja Pak and State Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology Eva Štravs Podlogar.
Photo: Slovenian Tourist Board archives

BACK TO SCHOOL: EDUCATING INTERCULTURAL CITIZENS

Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Intercultural Citizenship Education

UROŠ MAHKOVEC

PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARCHIVES



How can we bring the world to classrooms and classrooms to the world? How can we turn the traditional learning spaces into innovative ones – collaborative, intercultural and socially engaged? What new partnerships are needed? How to empower teachers and stimulate other social stakeholders to act as intercultural educators? What is the promise of digitalisation in this regard?

Various global economic and cultural trends fuel national debates on multiculturalism in contradictory fashions.

While the temptation to close down our cultural spaces looms large, the need to open them up is greater than ever.

In a region such as the Mediterranean, characterised by increasing movements of people and thus by growing multiculturalism, citizens' well-being largely depends on the success of intercultural and inter-faith dialogues.

EDUCATION HAS TAKEN CENTRE STAGE

In this context, education has taken centre stage – education that creates not only employable but also responsible and engaged young citizens. Schools, non-formal learning and youth work practice must therefore all combine to empower new generations, from the youngest onwards, with the social, civic and intercultural skills required in our increasingly diverse and intertwined world.

We are therefore pleased to announce the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Intercultural Citizenship Education that will take place in Piran on 9 and 10 October 2017. It is organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation (the key inter-governmental institution in the Mediterranean, bringing together civil society and citizens across the region), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia and the Euro-Mediterranean University – EMUNI.

It will be a major EuroMed event to showcase, debate and advocate for intercultural citizenship education as a central tool for intercultural dialogue, and to offer a set of recommendations for governments, schools, trainers and other social stakeholders. It will provide an opportunity for networking to exchange good practices and create a shared approach to promoting intercultural citizenship education.

If you are an expert, educator or a civil society member pushing for change in these areas – or wish to do so – you're warmly welcome to join our endeavour. The conference is also open to local and national education authorities, the media, businesses, researchers and all others else interested in the topic.

In order to have a transformative impact, intercultural citizenship education must involve the widest range of social stakeholders.

MORE IS NEEDED

National policies and good practices are no longer enough. A more structured, regional approach is needed. Today more than ever, the Euro-Mediterranean region needs a positive regional narrative, one that embraces cultural diversity, positive inter-faith dialogue and proactive citizenship. Slovenia is proud to be one of its main promoters.

#Educate4dialogue

Programme and more info: annalindhfoundation.org/education-dialogue



Blaž Kavčič

TENNIS IN SLOVENIA

Increasingly popular sport

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: STANKO GRUDEN/STA

The first half of August in Slovenia is reserved for tennis. This year Portorož once again played host to the ATP Challenger tournament, which again brought an exciting variety of events to the Slovenian coast.

For a long time now the tournament has not just been the biggest sports event on the coast, held at a time when a lot of foreign guests are visiting the Slovenian part of the Mediterranean, as it also offers a chance to forge business ties and to have some fun. As the president of the Slovenian Tennis Association, Marko Umberger, says, the event really spices up life on the coast.

“This is the biggest summer sports event in Slovenia, and a real tennis festival. Some outstanding tennis players have confirmed participation, including the Slovenians Grega Žemlja and Blaž Kavčič.”

Marko Umberger is thrilled with the good showing of Polona Hercog at Wimbledon, who managed to play her way into the third round of the tournament after a long-term injury that kept her from competing. He also notes that interest in tennis in Slovenia is growing again. “Eighty-two clubs that are members of the Slovenian Tennis Association have child and youth drives. We should be aware that on the world scale, competition in tennis is extraordinary. But I’m a big optimist, especially regarding the girls. I want our current best players to keep on playing and I want them to be joined soon by some younger players.”

SOME INTERESTING HISTORY FACTS

Tennis has a fine tradition in Slovenia, after spreading here when the country was still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to relatively reliable testimony, one story is that tennis was first brought to the territory of modern-day Slovenia by the professional colleagues – senior Austrian officers – of the founder of modern lawn tennis, British Major Walter Clopton Wingfield.

Tennis was therefore being played in around 1880 in the military barracks in Ljubljana and Maribor. It was played mainly by the officers’ wives, since it was fun in which they could be actively involved.

Tennis was also hugely popular among Slovenian students studying at universities across the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is interesting to note that the first Slovenian to build a tennis court was the writer Ivan Tavčar. He built the court at his estate at Visoko in Poljanska dolina in 1897. He himself played tennis, and enjoyed both its playful and sporting dimensions.

Later on tennis became popular at tourist resorts and fashionable locations, which at that time included Bled, Portorož and Rogaška Slatina. The hotels there were already organising tennis tournaments, and tennis became increasingly a social game. The first club was founded in Celje in 1899. Club activity then died out during the First World War, and was only brought back to life in 1927.

Numerous players have written their names into Slovenian tennis history, and outstanding among them were Mima Jauševc and Boris Breškvar.

Mima is the only Slovenian woman ever to have won one of the four Grand Slam tournaments in the singles category. In 1977 she won the French Open. At the same tournament she made it to the final twice, in 1978 and 1983, when she was beaten by Virginia Ruzici and Chris Evert, respectively. Boris Breškvar also trained many names in tennis, and is best known for having trained one of the greatest of all players, Boris Becker.



TWO SLOVENIAN FOREST RESERVES NOW ON UNESCO LIST

Krokar and Snežnik-Ždrocle

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

Krokar Virgin Forest
Photo: Janez Konečnik

In July this year the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) inscribed 63 new areas of ancient and primeval beech forest in 10 countries on the World Heritage list. They include the Krokar Virgin Forest and Snežnik –Ždrocle.

The new designation "Ancient and primeval beech forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe" marks a major success, both for Slovenia and Europe, as well as for global protection of natural heritage. For Slovenia, this signals recognition for outstanding past work and the additional promotion of the country as a green destination, where we are actively conserving nature, in part through adopting close-to-nature forest management practices.

For Slovenia, this is only its second entry on the list of natural sites within the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In 1986, the Škocjan Caves were the first site in the country to be placed on the list. With this new addition Slovenia now has four entries on the World Heritage list, and as well as the two natural sites there are two in the domain of cultural heritage: the mercury heritage of Almaden and Idrija, the prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps, and pile dwellings in the Ljubljansko Barje wetland.

Of the total 1,073 entries on the World Heritage list, those for natural heritage account for only around 20% (206), and in the region of Europe and North America, in which Slovenia is placed statistically under the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, natural heritage sites amount to just 12% of the total. The new inscription that Slovenia has gained is also an example of good international cooperation, for the entire procedure involved as many as 12 countries, and can serve as a model for similar complex nominations in other parts of the world.

The two reserves that have been entered in the list are forests in which the natural processes have proceeded uninterrupted for more than 10,000 years.

Research findings regarding the process of renewed expansion of beech forests across Europe following the last Ice Age indicate that the wider area of the Krokar Virgin Forest reserve ranks as one of the most important Ice Age beech refuges. It was from this very area that beech trees spread throughout the major part of Europe.

KROKAR VIRGIN FOREST

A forest that has never heard an axe at work is known as a virgin forest. Virgin forests or their remnants in Europe are generally found at higher elevations and in remote locations. The virgin forest of Krokar (also called Ravenski gozd) lies in a montane belt at an elevation of 856 to 1180 m on the south-eastern slopes of Borovška gora. Its surface area of 74.49 ha makes it the biggest in Slovenia. It lies between the Sotla, Sava and Krka rivers. A section of it was excluded from commercial use back in 1885.

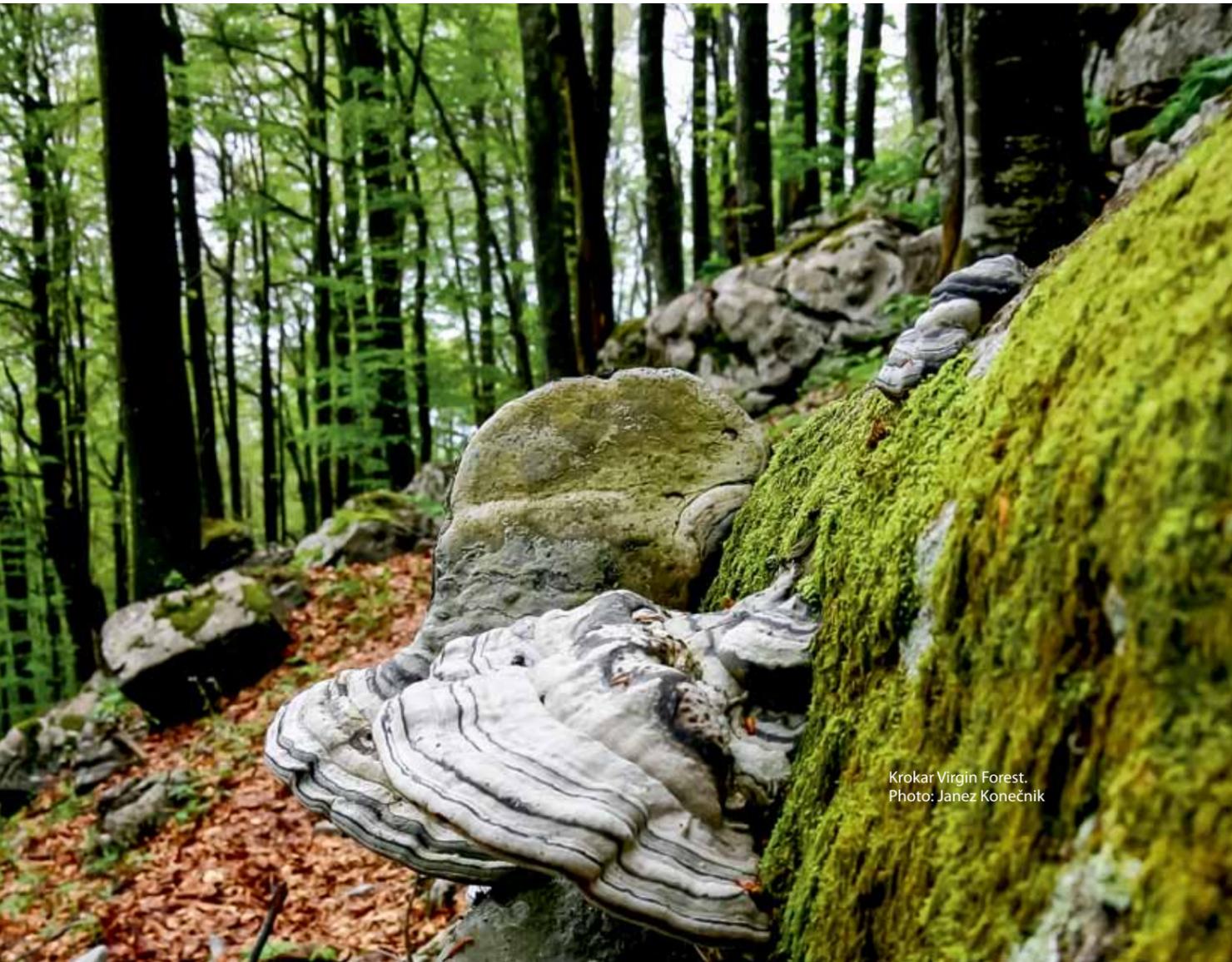
The major portion of the virgin forest features dolines and plateaux, and the prominent summits of Cerk and Krokar along with their precipitous rock faces, named Kamniti zid (Rock Wall), in the northeast and the precipitous rock faces that open up towards the south into the Kolpa river canyon.

The bedrock is dolomite and limestone, and the boundary can clearly be seen in the craggy surface. The average year-round temperature is low.

Owing to the differing bedrock and varied terrain, the vegetation is diverse. The Krokar Virgin Forest is a habitat principally for oak, hornbeam and black alder. By the southern precipitous rock faces towards the Kolpa canyon you can also find topophilic species such as Italian maple (*Acer obtusatum*), whitebeam (*Sorbus Aria L.*) and pines (*Pinus L.*). There are also some endangered bird species to be found here: the middle spotted woodpecker, lesser spotted eagle, collared flycatcher, black stork and stock dove.

SNEŽNIK-ŽDROCLE

Snežnik-Ždrocle lies in the heart of the Snežnik high-karst plateau, and includes the highest peak of Snežnik (1796 m). This is an expansive high-karst plateau in the southwest of Slovenia. The reserve covers an area of 776.80 ha at an elevation of 1200 to 1796 m above sea level. The outstanding feature of this forest reserve is the beech stands, which form the upper forest boundary typical of the Dinaric



Krokar Virgin Forest.
Photo: Janez Konečnik

Alps, and that occur in few places in the world. In most Alpine areas this boundary is comprised of spruce and larch forest.

Owing to the varied and special flora, in 1964 the summit area of Snežnik was declared a natural site of special interest and a botanical reserve (196 ha). This area is indeed home to a mix of plants that belong in different geographical environments.

After the last Ice Age, plants shifted towards warmer locations, in other words from the Alpine area towards the south and Snežnik. And when the climate warmed after the Ice Age, plants from southern locations also found their way to Snežnik.

The bare summit of Snežnik is dominated by clumps of bellflower and sedge (*Edraianthus-Caricetum firmae*). In this area you can also find the *Cerastium dinaricum* endemic to Slovenia, while Justin's bellflower (*Campanula justiniana*) is also considered an endemic species (Snežnik-Gorski Kotar). The rich flora of this area also offers glimpses of edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*), silvery yarrow (*Achillea clavinae*) and Alpine snowbell (*Soldanella alpine*).

You might even catch sight of the three large predators in this area: the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*) and lynx (*Lynx lynx*), which are all protected and also qualifying species for a Natura 2000 area. The protected species of predators in this area also include wildcats (*Felis silvestris*). The most common species of game in this area are deer (*Cervus eleaphus*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), martens (*Martes sp.*), badgers (*Meles meles*) and foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*). Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) numbers are rising, and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) are also present to a lesser extent. When there are favourable thermals, an occasional golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) flies over Snežnik. As well as these highlights, there are of course many more animal species here.



Sredni detel (*Dendrocopos medius*).
Krokar Virgin Forest
Photo: Gregor Bernard



Arabis Scopoliiana, Snežnik - Zdrocle
Photo: Špela Trabič

EVEN GREENER SLOVENIA

In line with commitments agreed as part of the nomination, the signing of a Declaration of Intent for the common protection and management of beech forest areas is anticipated, to be led by the ministers responsible for nature protection. For the first 12 years of the project, the financing of transnational management is envisaged from Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain.

The Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning will continue working with the key Slovenian organisations that took part in the successful inscription, in other words the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Office for UNESCO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in particular the Slovenia Forest Service and Slovenian Nature Protection Institute. The aim is to improve the existing methods of forest management.



Snežnik Zdrocle

The plant life here shows visible signs of the extreme natural conditions: (strong north wind, abundant precipitation, especially snow, and low temperatures). Due to the prevailing northern winds, on the exposed highest parts the trees are small and have twisted "wind trained" branches, permanently holding their positions in the direction of the wind.

Photo: Spela Habič



Krokar Virgin Forest.
Photo: Janez Konečnik

