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The latest from Slovenia

IN FOCUS: High-flying Slovenian companies
IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: Fashion's Jožica Brodarič
GASTRONOMY: Making Food Look Good

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High-flying Slovenian companies

Long tradition, clever strategy and constant innovation



Photo: Gorenje Group archive

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Jožica Brodarič

An innovative trend-setter in Slovenian fashion and design



Photo: Urban Modic

GASTRONOMY 32

Food design

Food pleasing to the eye



Photo:Ukom archive

SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

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Photo: Bruno Tatič

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

The importance of being cool

The expression *cool* has emphatically entered the Slovenian language, and not only as a youth slang word. *Cool* denotes something funny, original, alluring, worthy of attention, top quality, special or even socially responsible.

Competition in the business environment is harsh, and companies must never stop fighting to maintain and increase their market share. A good market strategy is essential. Companies not only have to follow trends but must indeed create them. They must, in other words, be *cool*. *Cool* products are produced by cool people. So let's take a look at who's cool in Slovenia. Here we introduce some outstanding companies with long traditions whose middle name is "success". These are companies open to innovation and ready to take risks with innovations like those presented by Slovenian innovators at the recent exhibition entitled "Creating New Jobs with Innovations". Trends are made by innovators. So we spoke about various aspects of creativity and about who was currently catching the eye in Slovenia with fashion expert Jožica Brodarič.

About those who stand out from the crowd. One such was the OHO group, whose founding father was the sculptor Marko Pogačnik. They developed a concept of art that is neither art for art's sake nor serving just one culture. One incubator of such trends in Ljubljana is now Kino Šiška - Centre for Urban Culture. In Slovenia there are numerous trendsetters active in a variety of fields – music, fashion, sports, media, culture...

Slovenia has much to show that is *cool*. Slovenia is green, clean, small and diverse. It has plenty of interesting stories, so we have selected for you some that show the character of the individual regions. For instance, the story of the Carniolan sausage in space, shining among the stars. Both figuratively and literally! Green, active and healthy – this is the message Slovenia will convey at the Milan Expo next year. In its pavilion totally made of natural materials, Slovenia will unfold its story of salt, bees, water, mountains and much more. *Cool*, isn't it?

Yes, it's also true that something that is cool one moment may become utterly *uncool* the next. But anyone who has the ability to think creatively stays cool forever! If we wish to stay cool, we must unrelentingly look for new ideas and create our own style. And it is this, in my opinion, that is really *cool*!



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

“Small is beautiful” – where else but Slovenia?

Somehow I cannot get out of my head a pleasant experience that I had this summer when I was on vacation. I was walking along a mountain trail an area very similar to Slovenia’s Julian Alps – in the Durmitor mountains national park of Montenegro. Everything – the relief, vegetation, rocks and even the animals – reminded me of the alpine valley of Trenta in my home country, in my opinion one of the most beautiful mountain valleys in the world.

Along the way, I met a traveller who was eagerly admiring the beautiful scenery and taking photos. After an initial greeting, we joined in our admiration of the beauty of the day and the nature, learning that we were both for the first time in this small corner of Europe. My fellow traveller, a man of somewhere between 35 and 45 years, told me that he was from England and that after a decade of hard work he had decided to take a long leave and travel in an RV across Europe, a continent which he as an islander was not particularly familiar with. We said a few words about the side-effects of the famous Splendid Isolation and then he asked me where I was from. From Slovenia, I said, half expecting him to slightly raise his eyebrows, smile politely at me and ask the inevitable question.

But no, quite the opposite, in fact. “Slovenia? A wonderful country. I was there two months ago, it was an unforgettable experience,” he said with excitement and went on to describe first Ljubljana and then Bled, Bohinj, Vogel, Stara Fužina na Gorenjskem, Štanjel, Bovec and Piran, where he had spent ten days of his “eurotour”.

“Slovenia is the most beautiful country I have visited during my travels around Europe,” he added. I was not entirely sure that I had heard him right, because he had also travelled across France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, all tourist superpowers, which should, in line with all expectations, overshadow our small country on the sunny side of the Alps. “What was it that you liked about it so much,” I asked, somewhat doubtful, but was immediately embarrassed about the lack of patriotism in my words. He then began to list things that Slovenians took for granted, although it was obvious that to him they were not to be so taken: “The kindness of the people, the knowledge of languages, cleanliness and orderly living, well-preserved nature, no crowds and no intrusive tourist services,” he said. “But all this can

also be found elsewhere; Slovenia’s greatest asset is undoubtedly the diversity of its landscape and culture. So much in such a small place”. In the morning, I took a cable car to Vogel and admired the mountain scenery, and in the evening, I enjoyed the tastes and smells of the Mediterranean in one of the restaurants in the Karst.” I no longer remember who introduced the rather tired phrase “small is beautiful” first, but we both agreed that it was more than appropriate in the case of Slovenia. I tried to get my accidental English acquaintance to visit Slovenia once again on his way home to the British Isles so that I could show him some other boutique attractions that Slovenia had to offer. He politely assured me that he would certainly try, but could not make any promises, because one could never know where life might take you. Then we said a warm goodbye, wishing one another a pleasant holiday.

My brief encounter with the English traveller was instructive not only because it provides an opportunity to reflect on possibilities for the development of Slovenian tourism, but also because it touches on wider issues. Does Slovenia know how to take advantage of its geographical position and the historical and cultural characteristics that derive from it? And if so, to what extent? As you can read on the next few pages of the magazine in front of you, these 20,000 square kilometres with their two million inhabitants embrace the rich heritage of Europe, bearing the traces of the turbulent developments in the decades of development of European cultures and nations. Slovenia is truly Europe on a small scale, as no European phenomena, positive or negative, have passed it by. This you can discover for yourself if you visit one of the Slovenian museums or galleries, the national library, the science institute, university premises or sports stadiums. I also recommend that you visit one of the successful Slovenian companies, which are not few in number, to take a look at what they are producing (never mind that the current overall fiscal and macroeconomic image of the country is not especially flattering). As for modern Slovenia, one question that arises is that of its self-image, which should be based on confidence and the awareness of what we have experienced and of what we have and can still achieve. One of the points of departure for such an attitude is the already mentioned concept “small is beautiful”, which is often misinterpreted, but can be very useful in the case of Slovenia.

High-flying Slovenian companies Long tradition, clever strategy and constant innovation

What is the secret of the success of those major Slovenian companies which have continued growing and developing for the past several decades? Krka, Gorenje, Kolektor, Adria Mobil, Elan – in spite of the difficult economic situation they have managed to maintain their market position both at home and abroad. They are proof that perseverance, business acumen and innovativeness are the right choices to achieve your goals. They have become companies Slovenians can be proud of.



Photo: Gorenje Group archive

The key strategy of the Gorenje Group is to focus on products and services for the home, differentiation through design-driven innovations, expansion to selected global markets and large cities, and creation of strategic partnerships.

Behind many successful and innovative products on the international markets there is a Slovenian company. Their products reach the highest levels of quality, set new trends and shift frontiers. Successful Slovenian companies are future-oriented and aspire to be outstanding in their respective fields. Perhaps even to be the best.

GORENJE GROUP: A LEADING EUROPEAN HOME APPLIANCE MANUFACTURER

Gorenje Group, manufacturer of technically excellent, finely designed and energy-efficient home appliances, has a history spanning more than 60 years. With its brands Gorenje, Asko, Atag, Pelgrim, Upo, Mora, Etna and Körting, Gorenje is present on the markets of ninety countries around the globe. From the

start Gorenje has expanded its sales network beyond the national borders, and is now one of the strongest export-oriented companies in Slovenia, as well as being one of the major European home appliance manufacturers. The key strategy of the Gorenje Group is to focus on products and services for the home, differentiation through design-driven innovations, expansion to selected global markets and large cities, and creation of strategic partnerships. Gorenje's vision, reiterated in its Strategic plan 2014 - 2018, is to become the world's best in design-driven innovations of home products.

ADRIA MOBIL: TREND-SETTING BRAND IN THE EUROPEAN CARAVANNING INDUSTRY

Quality, innovativeness and

knowledge are the main pillars of success that Adria Mobil has achieved in its 50 years in the field of design and production of leisure vehicles – motorhomes, camping caravans and mobile homes. From the very beginning the Adria brand name has been marked with an international identity – from 1965, when the first caravan was developed and sold to Sweden. Adria Mobil is present on nearly all European markets, and today also in Russia, Australia, Japan and China. The Adria Mobil Group consists of 9 subsidiaries operating in different areas, from distribution of products, production of furniture for caravans and motorhomes and sales of tourist services.

"Achieving more than a 6% market share in the European caravanning industry gives us a positive feeling about our brand

name, which evolved mainly through constant investments in product development, innovations and high quality products from a state-of-the-art production line. Strong partnerships with our distribution network enabled us to capitalize our investments, while the competitiveness of our products has also been confirmed by the European market, where Adria is continuously ranked among best performing brands on the market," say Adria Mobil managers.

The main markets for Adria Mobil are in Germany, France, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and other European countries, where the culture of caravanning is strongly rooted and where Adria Mobil achieves 98% of its sales. "We are constantly seeking new business

opportunities and today the Adria brand is a global brand represented through one of the strongest distribution networks in the caravanning industry", say Adria Mobil.

With numerous innovations brought to their customers, Adria Mobil has established itself as a trend-setting brand in the European caravanning industry. "In the coming years Adria Mobil will continue to develop as one of the most dynamic brands in the industry, with high quality products and services provided to their customers on the global scale," say the company's management with confidence.

ELAN: TOP PRODUCTS FOR SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS

The 60 years old – and more –

company Elan is a leading producer and supplier of sports and leisure equipment. The Elan Group is a synonym for skis, snowboards, yachts and motorboats, plus a variety of equipment for sports facilities. All Elan's production facilities are located in Central Europe. Their skis and sail boats are produced in Slovenia, snowboards in Austria and motorboats in Croatia. Elan products are marketed by six wholly-owned companies in the United States, Canada, Germany and Austria, Switzerland and Japan, along with independent distributors around the world. An inventive approach and advanced technology are the signature of Elan high-tech and design-driven products. The Elan Group's mission is to offer the best to their customers and meet the highest expectations of sports enthusiasts.

With numerous innovations brought to their customers, Adria Mobil has established itself as a trend-setting brand in the European caravanning industry.



Photo: Adria Mobil d. o. o. archive

Photo: Elan archive



KOLEKTOR: TRADITION IN HIGHLY SPECIALIZED INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

“As a transnational company Kolektor is constantly focusing on development and research-based marketing and on solving the technical problems of our customers. We believe that there may be no success without innovation, which we strongly encourage. We also believe in mass innovativeness – our staff crowdsourcing.”

Last year, Kolektor celebrated its first fifty years. It has evolved into a global company established in Slovenia with a wide network of companies and subsidiaries in Europe, the United States and Asia. Present in the world's strategic markets, it brings together almost 30 companies with three thousand employees. The Kolektor Group's activity is focused on three areas: automotive, building technology and industrial technology. The company sells 78% of its production on foreign markets. It is expanding both on the domestic market, in particular in the building engineering sector, and abroad, on NAFTA and Asian markets, compensating in this way for the negative impact of car industry stagnation in Europe. Lately the company has started expanding to China and

Mexico.

What is most important for Kolektor's growth and development? “Innovations, investing in top technologies, quality managing systems and sensible business decisions, and highly competent staff are the drivers of progress. As a transnational company Kolektor is constantly focusing on development and research-based marketing and on solving the technical problems of our customers. We believe that there may be no success without innovation, which we strongly encourage. We also believe in mass innovativeness – our staff crowdsourcing. However, the key to success is breakthrough innovations, new ideas, cooperation with our customers” says Radoval Bolko, President of Kolektor's Management Board, adding that “we are a strategic development partner for our customers, providing them with fresh business op-

portunities. By involving clients and strategic suppliers in the early stages of our development process we are able to mark the development of automobile industry, building techniques, home appliances and energy globally. In doing this we maintain a healthy financial position with very low indebtedness.”

Kolektor's future plans are clearly defined. “Growth and progress based on new, advanced and complex products and solutions. In the coming years we will grow organically and through acquisitions. We plan to increase our turnover to EUR 750 million by 2017. Our goal for 2020 is even more ambitious: EUR 1 billion of turnover, with adequate profits and without excessive debt. This will make us a major company on the European level”, Bolko stressed.

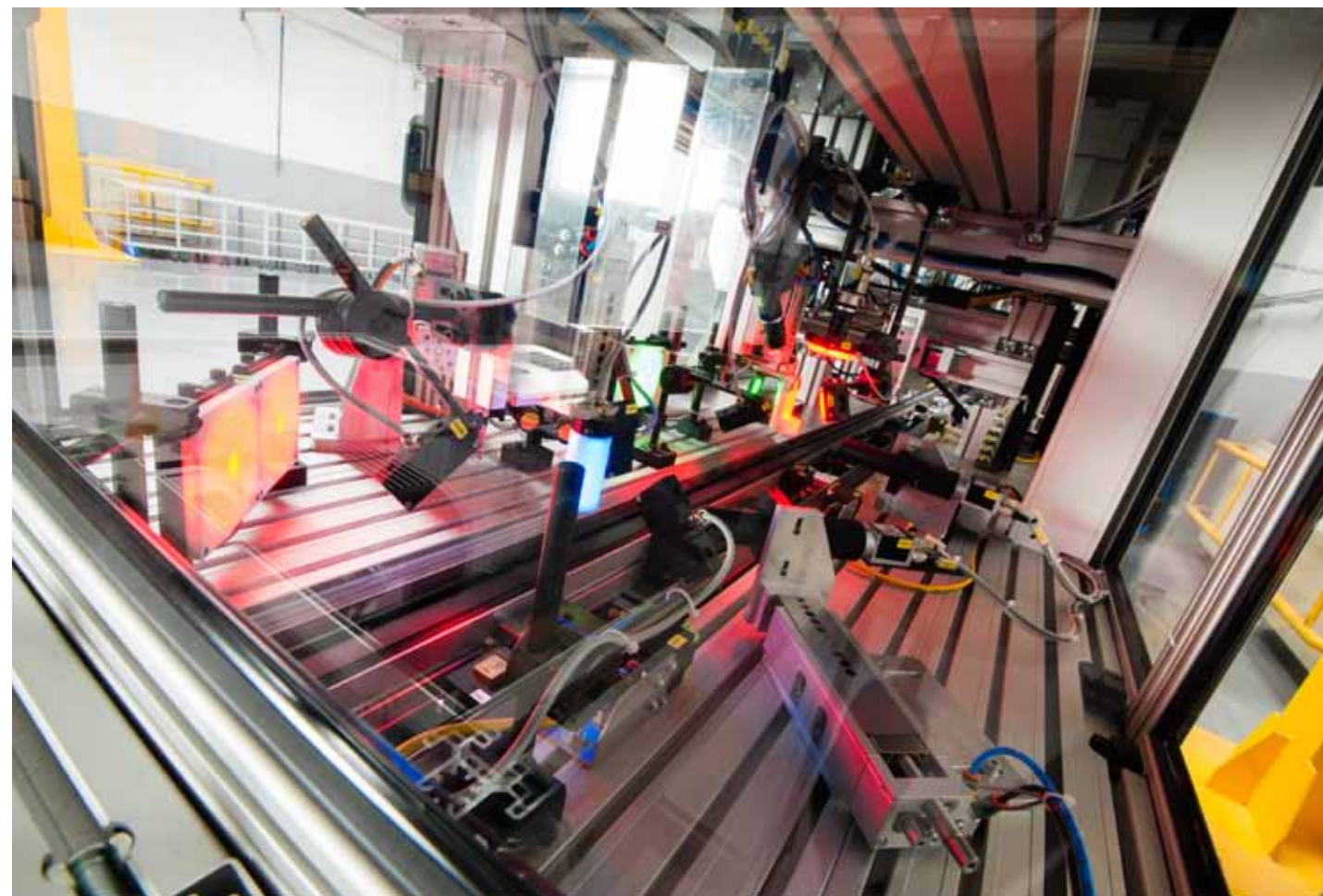


Photo: Kolektor Group archive

Photo: Krka, d. d., Novo mesto archive



KRKA: A TOP GENERIC DRUG COMPANY

The Krka Pharmaceutical Company of Novo mesto has been successfully implementing its strategy and pursuing its goals for over 60 years. “It is a combination of clear strategic orientations which, however, could not have been implemented without the commitment of our dedicated, innovative and professional staff”, say the people at Krka, stressing that the key to their success is top quality, safe and effective products, and a vertically integrated business model allowing the greatest flexibility. They develop, produce, market and sell their own innovative products. Their flexibility is crucial, involving the

speed with which they bring products to market and the reaction to market developments after the product's launch. Speed and a flexible approach, Krka's core values, are their competitive advantage.

Their products are sold in over 70 countries, from Vladivostok to Lisbon. They sell 94% of their production abroad. In the first half of 2014 their best performance was in Eastern Europe, with total sales of EUR 220.8 million, accounting for 36.8% of sales. This is an increase of 5 percent (EUR 9.6 million) in sales over the same period of the previous year. In the same period the highest relative increase in sales (11 percent) was generated in South East Europe

with EUR 75.3 million (12.6 percent of total Krka Group sales).

Krka invested EUR 157 million in research and development last year and earmarked EUR 164 million for this purpose this year. In the past decade, Krka has increased its sales three-fold, its profits six-fold, R&D expenditure more than three-fold, investments and the number of staff for more than two-fold and has become one of the top generic pharmaceutical companies globally. Trends indicate that the generic pharmaceutical sector will further expand, so Krka has good prospects for growth and expansion.

(Source: Krka, d.d., Public Relations)

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Jožica Brodarič

An innovative trend-setter in Slovenian fashion and design

Jožica Brodarič is a professional fashion designer. Her career began in fashion and costume design. But for more than twenty years she has primarily been involved in other activities, ranging from media and design to cultural management, production and providing expert advice to Slovenian companies.



Jožica Brodarič never lacks the inspiration for daily creativity. A youthful, trendsetting woman with rich experience in various creative areas in Slovenia. Her top-down perspective has made her a fashion guru in Slovenia. Jožica Brodarič founded the Trend Awards for Visual Creativity, so our interview began with this topic. And concluded with personal style. A style unique to Jožica and impossible to ignore.

You initiated the Trend Awards more than ten years ago. Have they achieved their purpose?

I founded the Trend Awards for Visual Creativity sixteen years ago. They have become well-established and valued. I believe them to be well situated in Slovenia owing to their underlying competency and very high standards. The fact is that trend recognition is not easy to achieve given that its themes cover many areas, actually all the relevant areas of contemporary visual culture. We really extract the best of the best as the expert commission only awards a limited number of awards and considers not only the best achievements in industrial, product, graphic and fashion design but also in architecture, contemporary art, costume and stage design, photography, illustration, comics and new media.

Can you say a few words about the publication of Trend, which you prepare yourself?

Trend is published once a year to document the Trend Awards. It presents all current award winners and their works and also features other top quality visual production of the current year. It is issued in hardcover and for the last two years also in English. It is ranked among the most prestigious publishing projects in Slovenia.

You once said that it is the mission of the Trend Awards to evaluate, award and promote the outstanding achievements of Slovenian authors engaged in a broad spectrum of visual creativity. On whom would you cast the spotlight this year?

I would like to acknowledge all four winners of the Trend Award for Visual Creativity this year: the

innovative knitwear fashion designers Urška and Tomaž Draž, set designer Branko Hojnik, the Slovenian photographer living in France Klavdij Sluban, and Gigo-design Agency. And of course, the famous avant-garde group OHO, which was awarded this year's lifetime achievement award.

Is Slovenia a trendy country in design, and I am referring here to visual as well as industrial and fashion design?

Slovenia is rather contradictory in this respect. We still have "classical" industrially-oriented old-style companies that neither understand design as one of the key factors in value added nor apply it. We can also say that there are hardly any companies left as the big ones from the textile, footwear, wood, and similar sectors systematically went bankrupt in the last two decades, one after another. But then there are also many young and promising designers and other creative professionals with fresh innovative ideas who are educated in Slovenia and abroad but then their potential is left to hang in the relatively static environment of Slovenia's barely emerging creative industries.

Nonetheless, let me ask – what are Slovenia's stronger points? In the past, industrial design flourished with the designer and architect Niko Kralj, Jože Plečnik was a renowned architect, Slovenians used to take pride in Mura products. Do you now see any such potential?

Let me first mention Niko Kralj and applaud the investors who have begun to revitalise the late architect's furniture portfolio and endeavour to make his timeless designs available in the future. And a number of prominent names have emerged. We have a long list of internationally comparable and relevant architectural firms, such as Sadar Vuga, Bevk Perovič, Dekleva Gregorič, to name only some. We can also boast of some very agile and, in terms of design, "long-established" companies, such as Elan, Gorenje, Akrapovič, Adria Mobil and some others. There are also numerous excellent individual graphic, fashion and industrial designers, top-level

illustrators and other creators in Slovenia, but they are scattered around, left to themselves and lacking any real opportunities to make a major breakthrough. Except for those who make a breakthrough outside our country – and in this area Slovenia is surprisingly strong. Here, I must note some of the Slovenian creators who are very successful in the international arena: fashion designer Nataša Čagalj, jewellery designer Lara Bohinc, industrial designer Nika Zupanc, sail boat designer Dan Lenard, and car designer Robet Lešnik, to mention only the most prominent.

Would you say that Slovenian companies have recognised the importance of design and started to invest in it?

Some already have and are now trying to make up for lost time by taking the right steps. But there are too few. It is truly unbelievable how much still needs to be done to get Slovenian companies to actually understand creative design processes and make use of them in their development. This may seem like a simple task, but it is in fact huge, even epic. It is not only about the "restructuring of companies", which has become a handy phrase for economists and managers. Everybody knows what needs to be done, but the crucial question is how to tackle it all. How to change attitudes toward design? How to change the deep-rooted opinion that design is nothing but an expense or at most an option? In doing so, some taboos that prevail across Slovenia's economy must be broken. For example, the taboo against "foreign" management boards, entailing the recruitment of international managers if needed. Or the inclusion of "art directors" on management boards – it is rather shocking that the majority of Slovenian companies have never had and still do not even recognise the business role of a creative director.

As a creative manager you offer advice to some Slovenian companies on the development of their trademarks. Are these companies engaged in fashion or in some other industries?

Less and less in fashion as there

"Of course, that would have been much easier to achieve in an economic boom. It is also true that this is a long and complex process, but Slovenian companies had ample time for gradual adjustment. Their failure to act can largely be attributed to non-professional leadership and management personnel stuck in the bygone "industrial" modus operandi instead of embarking on creativity."



are hardly any fashion companies left. I have otherwise provided advice to a range of companies stretching from the textile, leather and wood sectors, to the glassmaking and even commercial sales sectors.

How important is the creative industry to Slovenia?

Former British Ambassador to Slovenia Andrew Page, who was a guest of honour at the Trend Awards ceremony three years ago, mentioned that the creative industries contribute almost 6% of total UK gross domestic product and directly and indirectly employ more than two million people. I have not come across any such data for Slovenia and I am not even sure that we know how to measure this contribution. Anyway, we should start to measure and evaluate it as soon as possible, set realistic goals and establish a system to achieve them.

Consumerism brings with it a substantial environmental footprint. Are the designers and companies you cooperate with aware of this issue?

Increasingly so as various factors (media, education) have triggered a growing awareness of ecology and the importance of

sustainable development. Fortunately, the European legislation in this area is rather progressive and also strict.

Why have Slovenian companies such as Mura, Alpina, Peko, and the wood industry seen a downfall or have just been treading water?

Because of the lost opportunities in the past. They were unsuccessful in developing long-term strategies early enough, they did not establish their individuality or create their own trademarks, they found no appropriate niches, and failed to actively enter various markets. To put it bluntly – because they have never managed to free themselves from the grip of manufacturing. Of course, that would have been much easier to achieve in an economic boom. It is also true that this is a long and complex process, but Slovenian companies had ample time for gradual adjustment. Their failure to act can largely be attributed to non-professional leadership and management personnel stuck in the bygone “industrial” modus operandi instead of embarking on creativity.

Many Slovenian designers with potential moved on to work abroad. You are familiar with

this scene – are there any opportunities for them to return and link Slovenian industry with renowned designers?

It is awkward, unrealistic and unjust to expect those who have succeeded abroad to return now. Where should they return to, and to what? If I may be forgiven some cynicism, Slovenian companies are not really plying them with offers. One of the successes is Nataša Čagalj, who returned to Slovenia after an outstanding international career (she worked as a designer and creative director for Cerruti, Lanvin, Max Mara, Stella McCartney and other leading fashion brands). But after two years in Slovenia she gave up to a large extent and went back to London.

You also won the award for best personal style. Does a good personal style entail knowledge of trends or consistency with one's character and physical appearance?

Everything you mention is important. And it doesn't hurt if one has sufficient confidence and courage, refined personal aesthetics, the ability to creatively combine elements, a touch of rationality and ample information.

Entrepreneurship: the way out of unemployment?

Innovators and entrepreneurs believe in success and put every effort into reaching their goals. This could be the way forward for the large numbers of unemployed in Slovenia too. There are simply not enough jobs to go around and young people start thinking about how to provide jobs for themselves – outside, or within their own enterprises.



Unemployment among young people is a serious problem throughout the EU, but it is especially severe in Slovenia. Slovenia is one of the countries where young people study the longest and leave their parents' home the latest. It ranks first among EU countries in the growth of unemployment among young people. According to surveys, higher education no longer provides protection against unemployment.

CREATING NEW JOBS BY TAKING INVENTIONS TO MARKET

On 7 October 2014, an exhibition of inventions of independent inventors titled Creating new jobs with innovations opened in the atrium of the post office on Čopova Street in Ljubljana. The exhibition includes more than 40 inventions which, according to the inventors' association Active Slovenian Innovators (ASI), could create many jobs if

they successfully penetrated the market.

Through this exhibition, the ASI wishes to bring together young, unemployed social scientists whose knowledge could help put new inventions on the market. This is the weak point of many Slovenian inventors. The inventions exhibited are from very diverse areas: a new game for two players, a special version of a musical instrument, a bicy-

Through this exhibition, the ASI wishes to bring together young.



The former Minister for Development, Strategic Projects and Cohesion, Violeta Bulc, spoke at the opening: "Slovenians are very inventive. We know how to identify problems and opportunities and find solutions. However, we are weak in commercialising our ideas. There is much room for improvement in this area. Innovations can help increase the social capital. Only through knowledge and understanding of the world can we form the community in which we live, and innovations are important in this."

"If they joined forces with young unemployed people, particularly social sciences graduates who are seeking employment opportunities, they might bring products to the market and start making money with them."

cle that can be pedalled by the hands and feet, a foot-powered catamaran, an innovative tile-laying method, a purification device and a new bread oven. Many of the inventions were supported by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, which through a public tender and in cooperation with the Spirit Slovenia public agency provided consultation and assistance to inventors in applying for a patent and establishing new innovative enterprises, and co-financed the placing of products on the market.

The ASI wishes the exhibition to be visited not just by business people, investors and people generally interested in inventions, but also by young unemployed people, particularly social sciences graduates who could forge connections with innovators. The ASI's members

have excellent technical knowledge but many lack knowledge of marketing, entrepreneurship, law, foreign languages and similar, which impedes them in placing their products on the market.

MORE THAN 110,000 UNEMPLOYED ARE REGISTERED WITH THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Many of them are young and educated. Some have been sending job applications to Slovenian companies for years. The fact is that there are no jobs, and young people must start thinking about how to create their own jobs. Their opportunity lies in integration with independent inventors. Independent inventors are small entrepreneurs, many of them are individuals without their own company who do not wish or are not able to set up a business. According to studies done in Slovenia,

they are on average 53 years old and 90% of them are men. They typically have secondary or post-secondary education but also a lot of experience in various technological areas. Some of them are employed and make inventions in their free time. Many are retirees. They generally have some permanent sources of income that allow them to invest in patents and make prototypes. Unfortunately, only a small share of their inventions actually make it to the market. The problem is that inventors are good with technical things but do not have marketing knowledge or an entrepreneurial spirit. If they joined forces with young unemployed people, particularly social sciences graduates who are seeking employment opportunities, they might bring products to the market and start making money with them.



OOG IS THE WINNER OF THE NATIONAL COMPETITION STARTUP OF 2014.

The company has developed H2O-Pal, a smart device for measuring the quantity of liquid in a bottle, which helps you stay hydrated. It has generated a lot of interest abroad. The company's interesting name, OOG, is the acronym for Out of Galaxy. Igor Marjanovič, Director of OOG, explains that this name was chosen because the company was first established in the USA to launch a Kickstarter campaign. The company in Slovenia was established only a few months ago.

OOG develops technological patents focused on improving health and the quality of life.

One of their innovations is a smart tracker of liquid in a bottle, H2O-Pal, which through a Bluetooth connection and smart phone application shows the user how much water he or she has drunk. The tracker is an innovation with great added and functional value for people who maintain a healthy lifestyle, and particularly for those who need to monitor the quantity of liquid they drink (e.g. diabetics, people with kidney disorders).

SUCCESS ABROAD

Through H2O-Pal the company has generated a lot of interest abroad and has already established contacts with partners such as Philips and Panasonic, which will use their patent in their products. At the Consumer

Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the Bluetooth Special Interest Group listed H2O-Pal among the four most innovative prototypes of the year.

Igor Marjanovič: "My brother and I came up with the idea because our family has problems with dehydration. I searched the internet for such a device and since I didn't find one, my brother and I started developing it," explains Marjanovič. They are just finishing the prototype phase, which Marjanovič financed himself. There are six other guys participating in the team, two of them in the USA. In order to have a full team, they need three more members who have exactly what OOG needs.

Jožef Lorbek, Anthron

"Anthron is one of the leading world producers of sporting and industrial personal protective equipment. I started in a garage and even sold my car in order to invest in tools for making the equipment. I have never sought investors and always worked alone, but I was lucky to come across a buyer for my inventions at the very start. I was the first to include a designer in the heavy industrial work. I have always tried to do something that has never been done before and stay at least half a step in front of the competition."

Drago Lemut, Le-tehnika

"I started at home, now I have business units in Europe and China. My first product was an electric hairstyling brush. Today, my company's activities include hydraulics, pneumatics, telecommunication, cryogenics and LED lights."

Jože Bider, Bider

"44 years ago I invented my first agricultural machine - a tractor slurry mixer. I am a farmer and a lot of new ideas and solutions are born in agriculture. My recent inventions are related to the development and production of machines for biomass production and log sawing."

The inventions exhibited are from very diverse areas: a new game for two players, a special version of a musical instrument, a bicycle that can be pedalled by the hands and feet, a foot-powered catamaran, an innovative tile-laying method, a purification device and a new bread oven.

DJ Umek – Slovenia’s world-class DJ

“If you take up something seriously, work hard and work well, success is not far behind.”

Uroš Umek from Ljubljana, better known as DJ Umek, has become one of the world’s top DJs in the face of fierce competition. He is totally dedicated to music. His path to success was not easy, but he had the determination and confidence to reach the summit of his profession. He performs all over the world, and this interview was made just as he was in the middle of American tour.



Let’s begin with your humanitarian work and socially active engagement. We last listened to you in Ljubljana at the ‘Party with a Reason’, which is an annual event held in Tivoli Park. How did you approach this project and what results can you notice? Are young people attracted to a ‘good cause’?

Yes, young people are very attracted to a ‘good cause’. However, it bothers me that a lot of people come to Tivoli and listen to the music outside the venue without donating even a symbolic one euro for a good cause. Above all, it bothers me because many of them bring along a bottle of alcohol, which they bought. I think it would be so much better if each group bought one bottle less, donated that money and gathered in front of the stage to have fun. I am, all the same, pleased with the results. We have done a lot of good work, highlighted a number of non-governmental organisations and initiatives and supported them in terms of financing and promotion. We have collected money for young cancer patients and victims of violence; we constantly promote non-violence and social commitment; we supported the opening of a safe house, and, in the last few years, we have been supporting projects that are designed to employ young people, and quite a few young people have gotten jobs through these initiatives. I believe that public awareness of such projects should be raised constantly.

A few years ago, you recorded a video with the former President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, in which the President and you both appealed to young people to party in a responsible way and refrain from alcohol. How did this connection happen? Have you noticed any positive changes in young people?

We met even before Mr Türk became President of Slovenia, when he visited one of the ‘Party with a Reason’ events. Later, after he had already been elected, he visited our company and I acquainted him with my work, including with the basics of mixing music. He has always given

me the impression that he is sincerely interested in what I have been doing and also today, when we sometimes meet at the airport, I am surprised when I see that he is familiar with a recent detail of my career.

I do not know if our campaign has changed anything, but such actions are necessary, people should be made aware of the dangers of alcohol abuse. Otherwise, I do not believe that such actions can convince people to change their habits to such an extent to completely give up alcohol. I hope, however, that we have raised the awareness of at least some people who will remember this event and for a cause have a drink or two less, thus avoiding some particular problems. It is difficult to stop people from doing what they want, but you can warn them. As for the effects of such actions, the experts would know better. I do believe that such actions are needed and, because they are for a good cause, I like to participate.

You said in an interview for a Slovenian media that for the sake of pursuing your DJ career you quit school and basketball, which you had been training at, and that you would not advise young people to do the same, as it is very risky. Does the way you address young people have something to do with your personal experiences?

Not really. I am aware that what I did was a very risky move. I know why I got into it and I never doubted my success. This is a special state of consciousness and I do not know how I knew it, but I was sure of my success. As I continue to grow and mature, I become increasingly aware that also Lady Luck had something to do with it, and it all worked out. I believe that if you take up something seriously, work hard and work well, success isn’t far behind. I still have a feeling that people think that what I do is very easy. I can hardly imagine that someone who looks up to me as a role model would now quit school to pursue a career as a DJ and experience the same success. Because he would not. I have read somewhere that you need 10,000 hours of practice to

be great at painting. This probably also goes for other skills. As regards music, you may become good at it if you put in a great amount of time and energy. However, I do not know if you can become great at it. And even if you succeed, in the end it will probably not be enough, because a lot of elements need to fall into place. Today, even as a top musician you may not achieve anything. And even if you are very adept at the management and development of a trademark, or at promotions, you will still not succeed unless your content stands out. That’s why I say to young people that they should first take up music as a hobby and only when their prospects for success are good and it looks like something might come out of it should they seize the opportunity to make a business out of it or develop their life in that direction. But only if they are positive that they are really good and if they take something up with some advanced planning.

As a star of electronic music, you are famous worldwide for practically making the audience faint. How do you create your music? Do you still produce all the works on your own?

If I may correct you, rather than ‘make the audience faint’, I would say ‘put the audience in a trance’ (laughter). Yes, I still create my music alone; well, I often make use of technical assistance, but the creative part is all mine. Just today I received the vocals of a singer from Chicago, which she recorded with their technicians. Sometimes I outsource the mastering to my colleague, given that I am constantly on the road and that sometimes I do not have access to a studio where I could do it on my own without running into some difficulties or experiencing some significant delays. But not always. I am currently on a longer U.S. tour and next week I have a studio in Los Angeles reserved for two days, where I intend to finish the mastering of four or five pieces that I’ve created on my laptop in the last few weeks, when I was on the road. I may need a day or two more since first I have to get familiar with the studio and the sound in it. I still try to work alone as

DJ UMEK has recently signed a deal with Lufthansa and became an ambassador for the airline, further strengthening the alliance between the two. As UMEK has pointed out, Lufthansa has helped him a lot with his notorious fear of flying. By signing the deal with world famous DJ Lufthansa is “getting a positive message out to young travellers is becoming harder and harder nowadays. Youngsters don’t read newspapers and don’t watch TV, so companies have to reach out to their idols for help and UMEK is definitely a hero for potential customers in our region”, said Hannes Steinacker, general manager of regional department of Lufthansa.



OHO – avant-garde art of the sixties – provocative and still alive

Forty years on, the OHO group still generates much interest internationally. From 1966 to 1971 OHO was among the most interesting and important representatives of avant-garde art in Central and Eastern Europe. In those few years, its members and collaborators developed various strategies and procedures, from reism (the concept of a non-anthropocentric world of “things”) to unique forms of Arte Povera, process art, performance and body art, land art and conceptualism.

“I am ready for a show at any time. In comparison with bands, my programme varies much more, whereas in general bands perform a tour with largely the same repertoire. In any given three months I replace a large part of the music that I play. There are some pieces that I keep in the set longer.”

much as I can, but sometimes I have limited possibilities and delivery deadlines and I have to ask for technical assistance.

You do not often appear on the scene in Slovenia. Where do you mostly perform?

All around the globe. You caught me in Sacramento; my next two gigs are in Portland and Seattle; next week, I will be performing at a festival near Los Angeles; my tour then continues to South America and in December I return to Europe, where I'll be celebrating New Year's Eve. I am constantly on the road between the Americas, Europe and Asia; I have not been to Australia for quite some time and the only unconquered continent is Africa.

We haven't told the Umek story yet. When in fact did the story of DJ Umek start? How did you penetrate the foreign market?

I'll put it very simply: I released so many good records that I simply could no longer be ignored. At some point, when I had about a dozen notable releases on influential foreign techno record labels, it was quite frustrating because the demand for booking did not follow the demand for my music. Even after thirty releases nothing changed, but then, they simply could no longer ignore this Balkan guy.

What kind of a team stands behind you? Is your machinery the same as that of great DJs?

Certainly not as large and strong as that of DJs such as Tiesto, Armin, Hardwell and other superstar DJs, who are practically pop stars. In Slovenia, I regularly employ four persons who look after me eight hours a day, and I also engage numerous temporary co-workers in Slovenia and abroad, who perform particular tasks.

You are ranked among the top DJs in the world. What is the largest audience you have ever performed for? Are these figures important?

I've earned a place on the list of the Top 100 DJs for thirteen years in a row; its most recent edition

was published a few days ago, where I climbed 22 places; I am also ranked second amongst techno DJs. The fact that I am still on the list is, given the genre I play, still a big success and confirms our good work. In recent years, I have been performing at the world's largest electronic festivals, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors, from Tomorrowland in Belgium and Ultra Music Festivals in Miami, Buenos Aires and Chile, to Split and Tokyo and the Insomniac festivals, such as the famous Electric Daisy Carnival. In the last few years, it has mainly been American organisers who have put me on the main stage of their festivals, so that I very often perform for 30,000 people or more. The numbers are indeed important, perhaps the most important thing. In terms of business, music is derived from the arts; therefore it is difficult to directly compare who is the best. DJs and live acts create different genres in such a different way that there is not one unified scene. However, what we can compare are the number of tickets sold, popularity among music lovers who come to a club or festival or cast a vote for you in surveys, and similar. The organisers are very fond of us because we sell tickets and make money for them and, consequently, they invite us to perform new shows. It's as simple as that. Ultimately, the same goes for niche artists or musicians who operate on smaller and darker scenes; within those scenes, the same applies: DJs who attract the largest audience perform the most and make the most money.

How much room for improvisation is there in your gigs? Or are they, as a rule, carefully orchestrated events?

I am ready for a show at any time. In comparison with bands, my programme varies much more, whereas in general bands perform a tour with largely the same repertoire. In any given three months I replace a large part of the music that I play. There are some pieces that I keep

in the set longer. However, each set by all means features some brand new songs; I buy and receive music on a daily basis and I also create much of my own, which I include in my shows. For example, in my upcoming gigs I will also be spinning the pieces that I plan to mix next week in a studio in Los Angeles. But it does not really happen that one set would be played at one show and then the next show would feature completely different pieces. I allow myself a lot of room to manoeuvre since each audience is a bit different and also I myself feel different at each show and I adjust the set accordingly. The product is always within what I call a 'typical energetic Umek set' since my concept of work is to create a specific energy on the dance floor, which goes beyond the audio story itself.

You once said that a DJ is similar to a trademark – the more you invest in one, the more you will receive in return. In your experience – how do you create such a trademark if you come from Slovenia?

I am fortunate to be surrounded by a team of marketing professionals and I have already learnt a lot from them, including the basics of what a trademark actually is, how it lives and how it should be developed and nurtured. Based on my experience, it is important to invest in the trademark. We need to decide what message we would like the trademark to convey, as well as to set a very clear goal, an appropriate strategy, your own special story and to combine the right tools for the most efficient way of achieving the objective. There are different approaches, the market is saturated and everything counts: who you are, what you do, how you act, how you perform, where you advertise, what you promote, and what you want to tell people ... There are so many factors ... In this context, I am increasingly aware of the problem that the rest of the world treats Slovenia as a third-rate country, as part of the Balkans or Eastern Europe.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Marko Pogačnik, the founding father of the project

The founding father of the project was Marko Pogačnik: “At that time we were driven by an inspiration which could be called the revolutionary spirit of the sixties. Today we are discovering substantive characteristics of that inspiration. These are not restricted to the sixties, and we want to pursue them now. What I have in mind is, for example, the idea of OHO provoking some shocking wonder – OHO is an exclamation of wonder – and thus unbalance modern rational humans and open them up to new horizons. Then there is land art as the seed of a dialogue with natural space, and collective forms of art creation, and so on.”

The OHO group developed the concept of art that is neither self-sufficient nor serving just one culture but is answerable to different

intelligent units of consciousness. Questions arise about how they encountered these entities, how we can broaden our awareness and how we can be more in-touch with ourselves and others.

“We were interested in everything that derails a person from the tracks of reality that they are used to. We perceived the inspiration in the first rock musicians, in people engaged in alternative medicine and those who garden on the basis of a dialogue with plant spirits. We did yoga in order to learn about our multidimensional nature. It is essential that we turn away from the total commitment to reason and open ourselves to our intuition, listen to inspirations coming from the deeper layers of our being. Life must be lived as a creative opportunity and not as something preordained. Today, nobody forces

us to follow certain patterns, as was the case in the time of real socialism. We could shape our lives freely if we were not afraid of the consequences of freedom. The fear passes when we connect with our roots, earthly and heavenly,” explains Pogačnik.

And what needs to be urgently changed, what needs to be done at this social and historical moment in Slovenia? “We rely too much on the ruling systems of civilisation, which has already squandered its future through its anthropocentricity, its human selfishness. Now is the time for people who are prepared to listen to reason but give priority to the voice of heart (I'm talking about the sense of the whole), for people who know that it is only sensible to give and not to take and are in no way prepared to trample on any form of life.”

The OHO group developed the concept of art that is neither self-sufficient nor serving just one culture but is answerable to different intelligent units of consciousness.



ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ESOTERIC THEORY

In their latest period of activity, the group members developed an original combination of conceptualism, ecological dimensions and esoteric theories. For example, they used telepathy and similar means aimed at achieving a balance among the members of the group and a harmonious relationship with nature and the entire universe. The OHO group is considered to be one of the most important neo-avant-garde conceptualist art groups in Slovenian fine art. Its activities coincided with the then current phenomena in world art. The origins of the OHO group go back to 1963, when Marjan Ciglič, Iztok Geister and Marko Pogačnik, then students of the Kranjska gimnazija (general upper secondary school), published the first issue of the school newspaper *Plamenica*. From 1966 to 1968, OHO acted as a radical, provocative movement comprising the joint activities of young writers, filmmakers, fine artists and theorists (critics and philosophers).

In art, OHO rejected the unquestioned acceptance of the established anthropocentric view of the world, where humans are superior to things and classify them only through their hierarchy system of usefulness and intended use. It sought to establish a new, more democratic attitude towards the world. Reists believe that the world consists of different but equal objects, among which humans do not have any privileged position. "The aim of reism was to experience every object as an independent existence living for itself, the visual presence

of which is sufficient to understand its essence. Only when we convert to this way of thinking can we enter into the world of things, experience them and enjoy their diverse presence here and now. Reist works from the first OHO period were not artworks but items – objects of everyday consumption, which were placed in the area of reist attention through minor interventions. Their directly visible presence was at the forefront (Plaster casts of bottles and other objects, 1965–68). With their items, OHO members touched upon pop art, which they understood as people's art accessible to every one, as a plain on which art and life connect. In producing their works they used impersonal, serial procedures (casting and printing) to minimise expressiveness and the artist's subjective self-will. They also arranged their works through mathematical and logic programmes or using random variables or games. They staged happenings and actions in public places, the best known being the live sculpture *Triglav* (1968), performed by Milenko Matanović (1947–), David Nez (1949–) and Drago Dellabernardina (1948–). The three performers stood for several hours in *Zvezda Park*, their bodies wrapped in a drapery with only their heads sticking out, in this way ironically interpreting one of the main Slovenian symbols.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSCENDENTAL CONCEPTUALISM

In the period that followed, from 1969 to 1970, the various branches of the OHO movement narrowed down to a small group of fine artists – Marko Pogačnik, Milenko Matanović, David Nez,

Andraž Šalamun and Tomaž Šalamun. They comprised a life cell, in which circulation took place and every member was inseparably connected to the others. In February 1970, they carried out the *Telepathic Communication Project*, in which the members on different continents communicated among themselves. It was followed by conceptual projects in the *Zarica Valley* at *Dubrovka* near *Kranj*. The period of transcendental conceptualism was the concluding phase of the OHO group's activities. In 1971, after the successful *Information Show* in 1970 at *MoMA* in *New York*, the group deliberately isolated itself from institutional art and its members and their families settled on an abandoned farm in *Šempas* in the *Vipava Valley*, founding a commune called *Family* in *Šempas* (1971–1979). They considered this step as the concluding action of the OHO group, intended to integrate art and life in reality and not just in concept.

The OHO group finally dissolved in the late seventies and each member continued his creative work independently. Andraž Šalamun, together with *Tomo Podgornik* and *Tugo Šušnik*, participated in the exhibition at the *Museum of Modern Art* in *Ljubljana* in 1976, which implemented the concept of autonomous pictorial space and was a turning point in the history of Slovenian painting. Today, Andraž Šalamun lives and works in *Koper* as an independent painter. *Tomaž Šalamun* lives and works in *Ljubljana* as a freelance writer and is considered one of the most important modern Slovenian poets (his debut anthology *Poker* was published in 1966). *David Nez* lives and works in the USA as an independent fine artist. *Milenko Matanović* lives and works in the USA. Since 1986 he has managed a non-profit social organisation engaged in designing and constructing parks and other public gathering surfaces. *Marko Pogačnik* still lives in *Šempas* in the *Vipava Valley* and is involved in in-depth ecology. He has developed his own method of healing the Earth, which he calls *lithopuncture*.

Tanja Glogovčan

Storytelling reveals Slovenia

Information is static, but stories are dynamic and bring a subject to life. Our cover story tells about the various features of Slovenia, focusing in particular on the attributes green, active and healthy. This is Slovenia – a little piece of heaven full of the diverse beauties of nature.

Photo: Vladimir Toš/www.slovenia.info



Stories from individual Slovenian regions are rooted in real historical events and narratives or relate to culinary specialities. There is an abundance of stories from different regions in Slovenia to be told but it is not possible to highlight all of them. Slovenia has many fascinating stories to share, featuring themes such as joy of life, friendship, wine, love, brave personalities or mystical creatures.

ALPINE FAIRYTALE LAND

Certainly one of the most important cover stories for Slovenia is tied to the Alps. Most of

the stories relate to *Bled*, *Bohinj*, *Kranj*, *Kranjska gora* and *Škofja Loka*.

The legend of the sunken bell and the story of the *Bled cream slice* (known as *kremšnita*) are the best known among tourists visiting Slovenia. The legend of the sunken bell claims there is a bell at the bottom of *Lake Bled*. A young grieving widow had it cast in memory of her beloved husband. The bell never reached the island in *Lake Bled*: it sank to the bottom of the lake during a terrible storm. The widow spent the rest of her life in a convent as a nun. After her death, the Pope

consecrated a new bell and sent it to the island in *Lake Bled*. No one knows which Pope. The widow's wish was granted and the church bell on the island in *Lake Bled* still makes wishes come true – you just have to ring it.

The story of the *kremšnita* is the story of an unchanged recipe for a delicious cream slice speciality of *Bled* and the enormous quantities sold. The cream slice made its first appearance in *Bled* in 1953, when master confectioner *Ištvan Lukačević* brought its recipe to the town.

Špičnik

Slovenia has many fascinating stories to share, featuring themes such as joy of life, friendship, wine, love, brave personalities of mystical creatures.

How can the vice of the capitalist system be avoided today?

Marko Pogačnik: "The alienated world systems convince you that you are only safe when you surrender to their unmerciful yet at the same time attractive mechanism. The attempt to defeat capitalism through revolutions was unsuccessful because nobody persevered in the internal revolution. People are free to introduce changes into their lives without asking permission. Internal revolution begins when a person reconnects with his or her own essence and starts to live his or her truth in practice. This in itself changes the world system. Initiatives are grouping into networks of like-minded people and collaborators, and a new culture of living, economy and politics is being created. Such a revolution is organic, non-bloody and also sustainable. However, the participation of *Gaia*, the creator of life forces, and her visible and invisible beings is indispensable."



Photo: Domen Grodž/Masphotos

Sečovlje salt-pans

Recently, the story of the potica nut roll cake, a true Slovenian speciality, has also become popular in Bled. The Bled Island Potičnica Café, where along with a delicious cup of coffee, you can indulge in a slice of walnut, chocolate, tarragon or even meat potica is definitely an idea that Slovenia needed. There should be more potičnica in Slovenia. Other interesting stories from this region involve a fearless shepherd boy named Kekec, the Triglav Fairy Tales and the Goldenhorn.

SALTY AND SWEET SEA

Certainly one of the most important cover stories for Slovenia is tied to the Alps. Most of the stories relate to Bled, Bohinj, Kranj, Kranjska gora and Škofja Loka.

This region is famous for its story about salt, which is one of those best manifested in tourist products in Slovenia such as the Piranske soline brand, the Thalasso Spa Lepa Vida, and the Sečovlje Salt-pans Landscape Park. Among these stories, Sweet Istria (Sladka Istra) – the international festival of desserts and sweet products in September – is the biggest event of its kind in Slovenia and very attractive in terms of culinary delights. A special feature of this festival is that the organisers preserve the old tradition of preparing desserts, while introducing new forms of

creativity in confectionery.

This region also offers mystic stories, such as the Legend of the White Dove (Izola) and the Tale of the White Horse (Lipica).

SUN AND WINE

Along with the Alpine region, the Podravje region has one of the strongest cover stories – a fairy tale of sun and wine. The region is known primarily for the oldest grapevine in the world (Maribor). Grapes of the Žametovka (velvet) variety have been grown in the Lent district of Maribor for more than 400 years. The story has resulted in a local wine tasting in the Old Vine House and has produced a series of events such as the pruning of the old vine, the erection of the wind rattle, grape harvest and celebration of St Martin's Day. In the region of Spodnje Podravje, the town of Ptuj boasts the high-number of stories, associated with the Roman period and with carnival time.

DEEP UNDERGROUND

In the Savinja region, the town of Velenje and the story of brave miners are well worth a men-

tion. In the abandoned coal mine tunnels of the Škale pit, the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia was set up to offer an underground world experience featuring the Bergmandeljč dwarf, a local legend. The coal mine story serves as the nucleus of all other Slovenian coal mine stories and can be linked to all other stories of the Šaleška Valley countryside, which revolve around the mysteries of the earth (eg. the Smrekovec volcano), in harmony with nature.

THE LEGEND OF KING MATJAŽ

Once upon a time, long ago, the Slovenian land was ruled by the wealthy and just King Matjaž. Peace and prosperity reigned in the country, but then a horde of Turks swarmed in from the East and attacked the country. In the unequal fight, King Matjaž and his army fought bravely until the king was only left with a handful of men. When the king realized that the Turks were too strong, he and his surviving companions retreated. Yet, because the king was a just ruler, he was not killed, and the cliff opened up to him and hid him from his enemies. He now sleeps at a table with his soldiers, and once



Photo: Aleš Fevžer/www.slovenia.info

Velika Planina

his beard grows long enough to wrap nine times around the table he will wake up and rescue his people from their oppressors. The legend has produced a tourist event "The Castles of King Matjaž" with children and adults building castles from snow under Peca mountain in the Koroška region.

THE LAND OF HEALTH AND FRIENDLY PEOPLE

Stories from the Pomurje region are mainly associated with the numerous spas and thermal springs, viticulture and wine production, horse breeding and cuisine (Prekmurje pork meat and sausages, Prekmurje stew (bograč), prleška tünka (pork and minced bacon with lard), Prekmurje layer cake (prekmurska gibanica) and numerous bread cakes (pogače).

This region is famous for the story about the formation of the Pannonian Sea. Millions of years ago, the plain of Ptuj, the Prekmurje region, and a part of the Goričko, Prlekija and Slovenske gorice area were covered by the sea, which bequeathed the land a rich legacy of thermal and mineral waters. Natural mineral

water springs in this area have been used for centuries. Thermal springs hidden deep in the heart of the earth were accidentally discovered by oil prospectors in the middle of the last century. Instead of black gold, they found the springs, and soon realised their healing power. Not long after that, the healing effects of thermal and mineral water on people's health and wellbeing were also confirmed by the experts. This part of Slovenia abounds with health resorts, which have also gained popularity among foreign guests.

DRAGON

In the country's central region, the Slovenian capital provides the best stories. Ljubljana is characterised by the story of its dragon, the Legend of Urška and the Water Man, and the tale of Martin Krpan. Among the tales of Ljubljana, the story of architect Jože Plečnik is worthy of mention.

Visitors arriving in Ljubljana information centres are increasingly interested in local products typical of Ljubljana. As part of the project "Taste Ljubljana", Tourism Ljubljana has recently

published a booklet on traditional Ljubljana dishes.

CARNIOLAN SAUSAGE IN SPACE

This article is incomplete without the 'Carniolan Sausage in space' story. Time for a modern-day story. Did you know that in December 2006 the Carniolan Sausage made its first appearance in space, taking off in Space Shuttle Discovery from Kennedy Space Centre, Cape Canaveral? The sausage orbited Earth in a care package until Christmas, when it was eaten by the astronaut, including Sunita Williams, the American astronaut with Slovenian roots. So the invitation goes: If you are unable to taste the sausage in its space version, at least drop by and taste its 'earthly' version at the Klobasarna Ljubljana sausage restaurant.

Slovenia is a country of boutique tourism, and its beauty lies in its very uniqueness. This is not just a beautiful country, it is a fascinating one. The landscape is diverse and every corner has its own story. Such a wealth of heritage is impossible to describe in just a few sentences. We would need pages and pages.

So the invitation goes: If you are unable to taste the sausage in its space version, at least drop by and taste its 'earthly' version at the Klobasarna Ljubljana sausage restaurant.

Slovenia, a “boutique” full of stories

Slovenia is a land rich in stories depicting its natural beauty and people. In Slovenia, we say that tourism is people, and that’s what all stories about tourism are about. Slovenia’s combination of natural beauty and friendly people is attracting an increasing number of tourists looking for a boutique get-away. In a land where there are no large hotel resorts, everything is based on boutique attractions, with lovely micro-locations and destinations that tell amazing stories.



Photo: Jaksic-Jeršič

Slovenia’s golf courses are placed in outstanding environment.

Boutique (and luxury) tourism has a long-standing tradition in Slovenia. Over a hundred years ago, the then Austro-Hungarian resorts of Portorož and Bled attracted wealthy guests. The Hotel Palace in Portorož attracted well-heeled Europeans, but then lost its shine. Its former glory, however, has been restored by the Kempinski hotel group, which has been operating the hotel for several years now. By tradition, Bled with its natural beauties is a synonym for Slovenian tourism. But natural beauties in themselves are not enough for boutique tourism.

One of the strategic objectives of the SPIRIT Slovenia public agency, which promotes Slovenia as a tourist destination, is to encourage the development and marketing of luxury tourism as an important segment of the tourism industry. For Slovenia is not and does not want to be a destination for mass tourism, but rather banks on an individual approach. The fact that Slovenia has one of the most unspoilt environments in Europe and the world, the SPIRIT Slovenia public agency says, supports the rationale behind the development of luxury tourism. They also note that luxury business tourism and

official visits are the most developed segments of tourism in Slovenia.

An individual approach is also one of the strengths of the Slovenia Explorer travel agency (www.slovenia-explorer.com), whose tours are designed by Gregor Födriansperg-Fedr and which has recently arranged a number of boutique custom-made tours for its clients. Gregor Födriansperg believes that Slovenia is an extremely interesting boutique destination, offering an exceptional combination of natural, cultural and historical wealth in a small area. The main



Photo: Jaksic-Jeršič



Photo: Hotel Sotelia archive

focus of Slovenian tourism should therefore be the development of boutique tourism, because Slovenia – with the exception of Postojna Cave – does not have capacities for mass tourism. We should devote our attention to a smaller number of wealthy guests, he says, adding that the main problem is the lack of Slovenia’s global visibility and air and rail connections. And we would also need to have more luxury hotels to promote boutique tourism.

What are the wishes of guests

who are discovering Slovenia as a boutique destination? “In addition to classic tourist sites, appropriate accommodation is of great importance in boutique tourism. The selection of deluxe accommodation in Slovenia, however, is relatively small. Apart from that, top-notch restaurants and Slovenian wine are also very important. This type of guest is more interested in the quality of services than in the price itself.”

The response from guests is very positive. “Most guests are thrilled

with Slovenia. They are also positively surprised because they see and experience much more than they expected before their arrival. As a travel agency, we do our part by carefully planning the itinerary, which is tailored to the wishes and needs of our clients. The selection of tourist guides is also important, since boutique guests are knowledgeable and well educated and expect their tourist guide to be able to engage in quality conversation on various topics,” says Gregor Födriansperg.

Above: The Logar Valley is one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys.

Bellow: Could you tell this is a spa?

Slovenia differs from other tourist destinations in that it has unspoilt nature and extensive forest cover. Slovenia is a harmony of diversity. It is a green world on a small scale with beautiful, unspoilt nature, which provides the basis for its tourist features. The hospitality of Slovenians, an individual approach to guests, excellent cuisine and wine (often with the “organic” label), the idyllic environment, and additional services are the icing on the cake.

Some of the tourist service providers in Slovenia have integrated their services with the natural surroundings in a unique way, thereby providing high-quality services and writing their own unique story. They are listed below.

Ljubljana

- Vander Urbani Resort is the only Slovenian hotel that is a member of the Design Hotels group. Vander is a boutique hotel, located in the old city centre of Ljubljana, with one of the best restaurants in Slovenia.
- Ljubljana is a paradise for those who like to eat well, as it features a number of top-class restaurants, including Cubo, As, JB and Maxim.

Western Slovenia

- Bohinj Park Eko Hotel – a hotel built of completely natural materials, offering the comfort and warmth of natural construction on the margins of the Triglav National Park. The same holds for the small wooden huts close to Lake Bled, which change the simple activity of camping into the glamorous experience of glamping.
- Kekec Homestead, Trenta. Kekec Homestead is situated at the source of the Soča river, in the foothills of the Triglav National Park. Hidden in the quiet embrace of an Alpine valley, with only the sound of the wind and the rustle of leaves as company, it offers its guests relaxation in an unspoilt natural setting.
- In the Soča Valley, there are the Hiša Franko house, which spoils its guests with exceptional gastronomic delights, and the famous Nebesa near Kobarid. The owners of these two know how to satisfy even the most demanding guests.
- The restaurant “Pri Lojzetu”, a first-class restaurant situated in Zemono Manor House in the Vipava Valley, which the chef, Tomaž Kavčič, has turned into a manor of culinary creativity.
- Goriška Brda: a small region of great pleasures. A number of wine cellars and organic farms attract guests to this region in the southwest of Slovenia. In addition to visiting Slovenia’s top winemakers (Movia, Simčič, Klinec and so on), you can pamper yourself with a stay at Hotel Gredič and enhance your visit to the region by visiting La Subida restaurant in Italy, a Michelin-starred restaurant run by a Slovenian, Joško Sirk.

Eastern Slovenia

- The Pule Estate in the heart of the Dolenjska region is the first elite countryside luxury apartment complex. It offers a unique combination of hotel luxury, gastronomy, well-being and beautiful natural surroundings.
- Thermal springs: a number of thermal springs in the east of Slovenia are a great natural basis for (luxury) tourism. The top-class facilities are a result of natural conditions, design and a sophisticated range of services (for example: Wellness Orhidelia, Balnea, Rimske terme).
- The Sun House, a design boutique hotel in Banovci in the southeast of Slovenia, is an oasis that promises outstanding accommodation and superlative local culinary specialties.
- The Logar Valley is one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys. Everything there exudes an organic approach and is in synergy with nature. The Plesnik family are the pioneers of tourism in this valley, and are one the first to combine natural surroundings, organic products and luxury tourism.
- In the Savinja Valley, there are several excellent tourist farms and the excellent House Raduha, which is run by one of the best Slovenian women chefs.

Photo: Vander Hotel archive



Ljubljana is a paradise for those who like to eat well, as it features a number of top-class restaurants, including Cubo, As, JB and Maxim.

The magic of Slovenian wood at Milan's Expo 2015

EXPO 2015, the next universal exposition, is to be held between 1 May and 31 October 2015 in Milan. Under the title *Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life*, it will feature food as its lead theme. The Italian organisers have high ambitions and expect around 20 million visitors.



The basic message Slovenia wishes to get across at the 2015 Milan EXPO universal exposition is the extraordinary natural beauty and the 'green' character of Slovenia, a natural feature that Slovenia is consciously and systematically striving to preserve.

Slovenia will be among the participating countries (see February edition of *Sinfo*). Inspired by the lead theme, we will appear in the Milan EXPO 2015 under the slogan "*I feel Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy.*" We will be telling stories of salt, bees, water, mountains, aviators and love of nature. Green, healthy and active Slovenia.

THE SLOVENIAN PAVILION

The pavilion's dynamic design is reminiscent of the Slovenian landscape – Alpine mountains, Pannonian plains, Dolenjska hills, and the karst landscape sweeping down to the Adriatic Sea. Under the surface there is a world of karst caves with sta-

lactites, stalagmites and underground rivers.

The pavilion will be built from natural materials, primarily wood and glass. Wood is Slovenia's strategic raw material; nearly 60% of Slovenian territory is covered with forest, the green lungs of Central and Mediterranean Europe. The exceptional wood-related history of Slovenia boasts the world's oldest known wooden wheel with an axle; it has been dated to 5,200 years ago, hence it is older than the Egyptian pyramids and the Mayan civilisation in Mexico. Wood is one of the most important Slovenian renewable energy sources and a sustainable material for the future; climate

change and extreme weather events, including this year's ice damage, remind us of how necessary it is for the world to promptly move towards energy efficient and environmentally friendly production and reduce concentrations of greenhouse gases. Compared to other building materials (concrete, steel), the production of wooden elements requires much less energy and pollutes the environment to a substantially lesser extent; moreover, the decomposition of wood following its use is less burdensome on the environment. Wooden products accumulate CO₂ and thus contribute towards its reduction.

THE MESSAGE

The basic message Slovenia wishes to get across at the 2015 Milan EXPO universal exposition is the extraordinary natural beauty and the 'green' character of Slovenia, a natural feature that Slovenia is consciously and systematically striving to preserve. The colour green, which is characteristic of Slovenia, is integrated into the very core of the country's brand I FEEL SLOVENIA, as well as into all strategic considerations dealing with

the country's future development. "Forward with Nature!" is the slogan underlying Slovenia's participation dedicated to the themes of environmental protection and food at the world exhibition.

We have safeguarded our wild meadows and crystal clear water. In the modern world, these are treasured as precious valuables, the most important assets to be preserved for future generations, also by means of green technologies.

Lumar Ig is one of the leading manufacturers of low-energy and passive prefabricated wooden buildings; the company offers innovative and environmentally friendly solutions and is present both in Slovenia and abroad.

SoNo Architects brings together a new young generation of Slovenian architects in the creation of modern, high-quality architecture that is emerging as a mix of architectural theory, study and research of locations, innovation and experimentation with new materials and construction methods.

Photo: Damir Kolar/Likom



ROMA VERSO EXPO

Slovenia also presented its pavilion in Rome between 13 and 27 November. At San Silvestro Square and the Vittoriano Gallery a model of the pavilion was displayed together with photographs by distinguished Slovenian photographers featuring green, active and healthy Slovenia. In the context of natural heritage conservation, the Vittoriano Gallery also hosted the exhibitions *The Appeal of Wood and Slovenia in Us – Lipicanci* by photographer Alenka Slavinec.

The pavilion's dynamic design is reminiscent of the Slovenian landscape – Alpine mountains, Pannonian plains, Dolenjska hills, and the karst landscape sweeping down to the Adriatic Sea.

Fashion designer Maja Štamol Droljc Ambassador of the new *Izdelek slovenske obrti* (Slovenian Craft Product) trademark

Maja Štamol Droljc is a well-known Slovenian fashion designer. Known for her creations for special occasions, she also designs one-of-a-kind items. Her style is elegant and minimalistic, and her signature colour is black. The collection she presented at the October Fashion Week in Ljubljana was, of course, black, enlivened by pink flowers.



Photo: Kaja Gaspari Lehen

Maja Štamol Droljc has succeeded in making a solid business out of her fashion design in Slovenia. Her creations are winning at beauty pageants, her theatre costumes are greatly appreciated by audiences, and she often does the overall styling for celebrity events. Her cooperation with the Finnish company Nokia resulted in a collection of evening dresses and apparel accessories with the L'Amour collection of phones. Maja Štamol Droljc is an artist, not just an artisan.

What is your most recent project?

This is my first signature jewellery collection. It has long been my aspiration to start designing jewellery and accessories, such as bags, belts and shoes, and I have made some individual pieces with varying success, but never a whole collection. Obviously no goal in life can be reached without effort and finally the moment has come for me to design a collection of plastic jewellery I called "Flower Destiny". It recounts the destiny of a flower... the jewellery was first presented during the Ljubljana Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2015 and received very favourable reviews. I am very happy about this, as the pieces were made in a small family firm that specializes in buttons. Making them was a challenge for them, just as it was for me, and we were very happy with the result, so I hope our cooperation will continue.

Where do you look for inspiration?

I keep up with the global trends in printed and other media. I like to visit international fashion fairs and, whenever possible, Fashion Weeks abroad. But I still get most of my ideas in the streets of big cities I visit with my husband several times a year. My style of both evening and everyday dresses is elegant minimalist. I want my creations to be in the mainstream, very well made, wearable and multifunctional, as I am profoundly aware that the times do not favour exaggerated consumerism.

Does small-series fashion design have a future in Slovenia?

There used to be a long tradition of textile manufacturing in Slovenia and I would like to see it revived. Small series production is not for everyone, most people prefer to buy off-the-peg clothes they may try on and buy on the spot, and the textile manufacturing industry is there to cater to their needs. On the other hand there are customers who want one-of-the-kind, different items and we designers are here

for them; we are able to devote our attention to them, to listen to them and to design for them clothes that reflect their personality. I feel that lately, perhaps because of the publicity of the Fashion Week, Slovene designers and their creations have been more highly regarded.

The Chamber of Crafts of Slovenia has recently registered the trademark *Izdelek slovenske obrti* (Slovenian Craft Product). You are an ambassador of this trademark?

That is true. It is my wish for products marked with this label to be recognized among the mass of low-cost foreign brands and for people to understand that these are products made by Slovene hands that had been paid honest money for their work.

You are known for your good cooperation with Slovene businesses. For the last Fashion Week you collaborated with the shoe factory Kopitarna Sevnica.

I have been in contact with its management for several years, there has always been a mutual desire to cooperate, but the time was obviously not yet ripe. This spring I finally persuaded them to participate in the Fashion Week. We made beautiful sandals and flip flops and sold out of them the day after the show. Kopitarna embraced my proposition to make a smaller series, which was then sold with great success through their website. What is most interesting is that the model is almost entirely made with their existing pattern, I only made the design and chose the leather and accessories. We were noticed by the professionals and we were among the three nominees for this year's ELLE STYLE Awards. As a consequence, we are continuing to work together, and have already made up a trend-setting slipper that was presented at the recent Ljubljana Fashion Week. The series has been entirely reserved by fashionistas who were, obviously, happy with the previous model. We will not stop there, I already have a sketch book full of fresh ideas!



Photo: Mimi Antolovic



Photo: Mimi Antolovic



Photo: Mimi Antolovic

Her creations are winning at beauty pageants, her theatre costumes are greatly appreciated by audiences, and she often does the overall styling for celebrity events. Her cooperation with the Finnish company Nokia resulted in a collection of evening dresses and apparel accessories with the L'Amour collection of phones. Maja Štamol is an artist, not just an artisan.

Food design

Food pleasing to the eye

We take our first “taste” of food with our eyes before putting it in our mouth. The nicer the dish looks, the more likely we are to choose it. Cooking has become an art, which appeals to our tongue and nose, but often to our eye too. Modern cuisine is following the general trend in art, which tends to shock and attract attention.



Photo: Mosphtotos



Photo: Mosphtotos

The attitude towards cooking and food has changed considerably in recent years. Today's chefs are true artists in their profession. Successful culinary masters have well-developed senses of taste and smell, skilful hands and a talent for arranging and decorating. They confidently follow their intuition, exploring flavours, colours and new combinations and ingredients.

Nicely decorated food catches the eye and we have the feeling it tastes better. An unappealingly decorated piece of meat put in the middle of the plate will not arouse much excitement in a guest. However, if we use the edges of the plate to better present our masterpieces, we add that special final touch to the food. It is, of course, preferable to only put edible things on a plate.

Modern cuisine is exploring new flavour combinations, discovering new dishes, studying old recipes and experimenting with new combinations and methods. It is curious about why some things go well together and why others do not. So you might be served dishes such as tobacco flavour ice cream, pastry made from white chocolate and truffles, chocolate soufflé with sardine and olive flavour, yeast soup with cinnamon, snail oatmeal, fish cream made from fish liver with tomato seeds, espresso with parmesan, cauliflower risotto with chocolate jelly, salmon in a liqueur, duck breast with olive oil and chocolate candy, smoked bacon with egg ice cream and many more. The flavours might be very unusual, surprising, even shocking, but they taste wonderful.

Cooking equipment is also developing and changing daily. Today's kitchens are very different from the old ones with wood-fired stoves and hutches. If one of our great great grandfathers was to set foot in a modern kitchen, he would think he had stepped into a laboratory.

For several years now, the Eat & Drink Design event with its original idea of creative integration of excellent cuisine and design has been an established part of the Month of Design. It is a unique culinary/design event bringing together the knowledge of chefs, designers and producers in a tasteful presentation of modern cuisine, original table settings and new food-related products.

A “decorated” soup will not only look nice, the decoration will improve its colour and enhance the contrast while giving the eater the feeling of better taste and making the dish more appealing.

Nicely decorated food catches the eye and we have the feeling it tastes better.



Photo: Ukrom archive



Photo: Ukrom archive



Photo: Ukrom archive



Photo: Ukrom archive

European honey breakfast initiative

For seven years in a row, every third Friday in November, Slovenian beekeepers have been organising an educational-promotional campaign for kindergarten and primary school children entitled "Honey Breakfast". On this day children have Slovenian honey for breakfast, mostly donated by various beekeepers. Now Slovenians want to make the campaign European.



Traditional Slovenian Breakfast

Emphasising the importance of breakfast as a vital part of a healthy lifestyle.

The idea for the educational-promotional campaign stems from the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association which now presents an initiative to establish the "European Honey Breakfast". The Breakfast in Slovenia has been supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

As the majority of a person's habits originate from childhood, it is vital to impart positive values on environmental consciousness already from an early age. *Honey Breakfast* is based on a collaboration of beekeepers and teachers and is co-ordinated by the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association and Public Advisory Service on Beekeeping. Every year, beekeepers societies from local areas collect

honey and most of it is donated to kindergartens and schools. Also an educational publication is published and distributed among children. Besides beekeepers who are in charge of presentations and children's workshops, mayors, various officials, athletes and many other prominent figures are present at the *Breakfast* too. It is supported by the media as well; they publish numerous articles and thus raise the awareness of the general public on the importance of beekeeping.

IN 2011, THE HONEY BREAKFAST DEVELOPED INTO A TRADITIONAL SLOVENIAN BREAKFAST AND SLOVENIAN FOOD DAY

The declaration of the *Slovenian Food Day* gives the locally produced food a special importance;

moreover it helps raising the awareness of the public on the significance of the locally produced and processed food and its consumption, and draws the attention to the importance of a balanced diet. The main goal of the *Slovenian Food Day* is to support the Slovenian food producers and processors and to raise the awareness about the meaning of local self-sufficiency, conserving the clean and healthy environment, preserving the rural areas, educating the youth about food production and processing procedures, and promoting the interest for agricultural activities.

Part of the *Slovenian Food Day* is the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast project which involves Slovenian kindergartens and pri-



mary schools in order to educate children about the importance of agriculture, food industry, beekeeping, environment protection and the importance of a healthy and balanced diet and physical activity.

Based on Slovenia's good practices, we would like to introduce an initiative to establish a *European Honey Breakfast* campaign.

In November 2014, *Honey Breakfast* will be presented at a 3rd International Beekeeping Conference, organised in Slovenia. The participants will have a chance to attend the breakfast in kindergartens and primary schools where they will get an insight into the project implementation in order to transfer the concept of the campaign into their native countries.

Vital for the successful implementation and good practice transfer of the *European Honey Breakfast* is the support of ministers and European parliament MPs – therefore we appeal to everybody to support the campaign and thus aid the nature and bee conservation. In the end, this will ensure food and a better life for everyone also in the future.

"It's so sweet!"

The goal of the European Honey Breakfast is to raise the awareness of the general public on the importance of bees and apicultural products, healthy lifestyle and the importance of locally produced food.

The results of the campaign are visible in:

- a positive attitude of children, teachers, and general public towards bees and nature
- an increase of the number of children who participate in beekeeping clubs at schools
- an increase of the number of young beekeepers
- an increase of the consumption and sales of honey and other apicultural products
- a support of local communities and companies for beekeepers

The goal of the European Honey Breakfast is to raise the awareness of the general public on:

- the importance of bees and apicultural products
- healthy lifestyle
- the importance of locally produced food

Slovenian wines

When women enter the scene

People known as foodies have become the trend-setters in Slovenian winemaking and cuisine, integrating both aspects of fine taste. In Slovenia, the practice of skilfully combining a dish with a glass of wine is in step with world trends. Foodies like cuisine with ingredients of traceable origin, plus the value added of fine wine – sometimes made by women.



Photo: Ubaldo Trnkoč/www.slovenia.info

Slovenia has ideal geographic position for winegrowing.

Our main goals are, of course, wine promotion and socialising. However, it is our great wish to present Slovenian women winegrowers and their wines at one of the major events, for example in New York, and we are putting every effort into making it happen.

Slovenia is proof that size is relative where wine is concerned. Its small geographical size is no real indicator of the quality of its wine. In winemaking terms, Slovenian viticulture belongs to the Old World, with recognisable French, Italian and German influences. Winegrowers agree that Slovenia's geographical position, surrounded by the Adriatic Sea, the Alps and the Panonian Plain is ideal for growing various grape varieties. It is no surprise, then, that Slovenian winegrowers have put Slovenian wines on the wine lists of prestigious world restaurants.

Winegrowing women from Goriška Brda (Brike, as they call themselves), who have recently

been joined by women winegrowers from other parts of Slovenia, have been proving for years that behind every successful winegrowing man there is an even more successful woman. In this way women winegrowers are also setting their own trends in wine promotion and winegrowing.

It all started a few years ago in Ljubljana, when the Brike organised a wine event in the city which was enthusiastically embraced by the public. It offered a new concept of wine promotion, more gentle and less stressed. This year's event at Ljubljana Castle also attracted many visitors, among them several influential women from other fields.

WOMEN & WINE

"The idea is neither new nor unique, there are many women's groups in the world devoted to wine. They are particularly strong in Europe and America. In addition to their involvement with wine, they organise charity and art events. The mission of our society is very simple: women socialising, wine promotion and charity. Today we have 100 members, as we only promote ourselves through the event we organise every year at Ljubljana Castle," explained the president of the Women & Wine society, Petra Rutar, adding: "Our members are women who love wine, like to socialise and have a positive outlook on life."



Photo: Tjaša Janovljak/Mosphotos

Women winegrowers from Slovenia are also setting their own trends in wine promotion and winegrowing.

The society also welcomes women from other professions – lawyers, restaurateurs, journalists, finance and PR professionals, doctors, etc. – and is open to any interesting suggestions. And its goals? "Our main goals are, of course, wine promotion and socialising. However, it is our great wish to present Slovenian women winegrowers and their wines at one of the major events, for example in New York, and we are putting every effort into making it happen," confided Petra Rutar. "Such initiatives and associations certainly add to the diversity of this sector and even bring it to a higher level. We will, therefore, continue our story and every year we will add new stones to this mosaic of Slovenian winemaking."

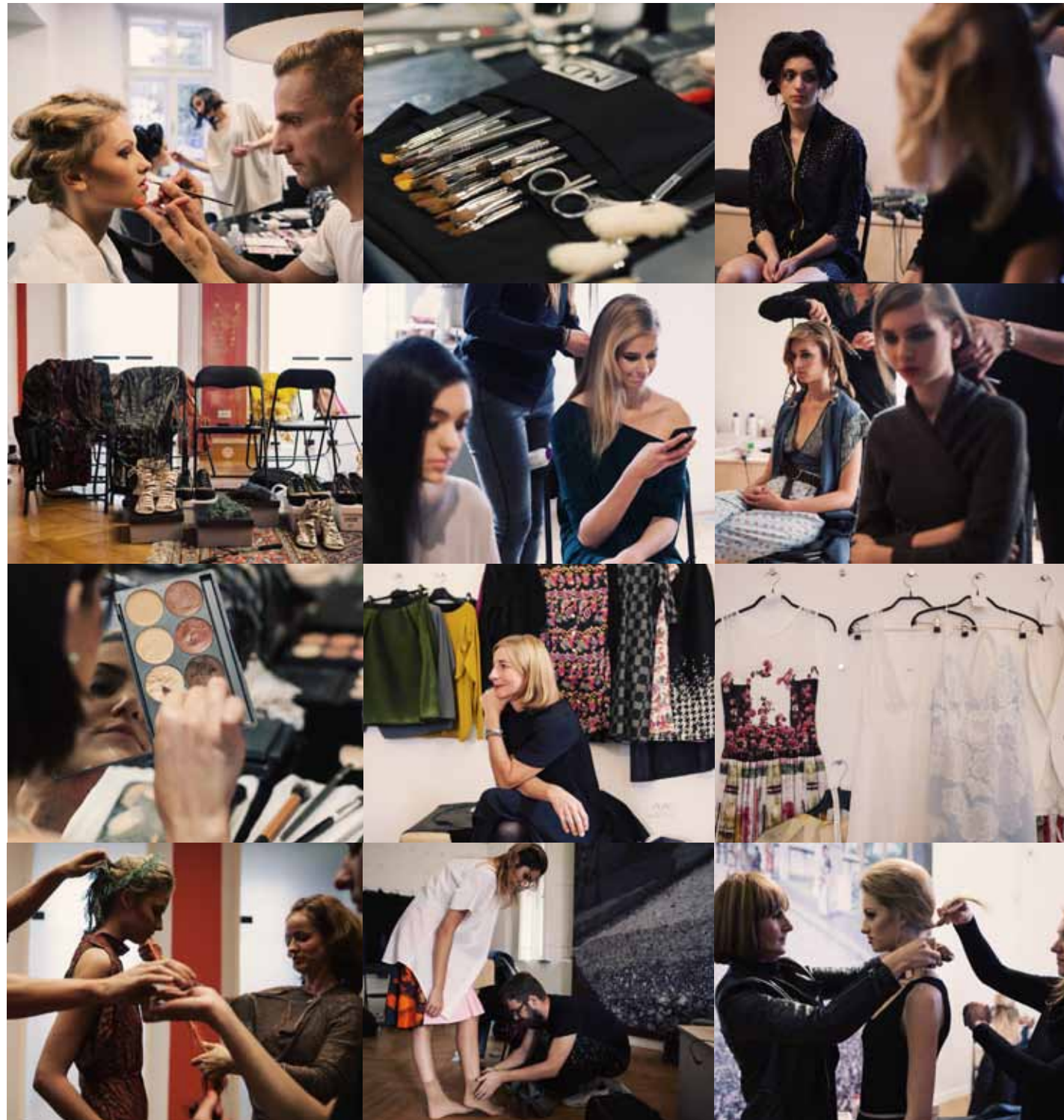
Did you know

- Slovenia has three winegrowing regions: Podravje, Posavje and Primorje. Each has its own specific microclimate, tradition, local characteristics and native varieties.
- There is a widely celebrated holiday in November called Martinovo (St. Martin's Day), when the must turns into wine. On this day, a St. Martin's feast is laid out comprising goose, mlinci (a type of flatbread) and red cabbage, accompanied by young wine. Mass celebrations of St. Martin's Feast are also popular.
- The Days of Poetry and Wine Festival is very popular, bringing together Slovenian wine-makers and poets from all over the world.
- Slovenian winemakers exported about 100,000 bottles of wine of renowned brands to China this year.
- Slovenia produces 80–100 million litres of wine per year. Of this 70% are white and 30% red. As much as 70% of Slovenian wines fulfil the criteria for quality and superior quality wines, the remaining 30% are table wines. Winegrowers employ various harvesting (e.g. late, selected berries or ice wine harvests) and maceration methods.
- Orange wines, which are considered natural wines, have become fashionable in recent years. Orange wines are white wines produced by the method usually used for red wines. This procedure gives the wine its characteristic orange colour.
- Lent in Maribor is home to the oldest grapevine in the world, a more than 400 year-old grapevine of the Žametovka (velvet) variety.

Ljubljana Fashion Week

The first row along the catwalk was reserved for visitors to Ljubljana

Who sets fashion trends in Slovenia? Whose dresses, bags and shoes are a feast for the eyes and a great temptation for the wallet? Anyone who was in Ljubljana in October could see for themselves that Slovenia has a fashion scene, since the Spring/Summer 2015 fashion collection was held on the city streets.



Almirasadar

Draž Knitwear

Nataša Hrupič

NiOka

This year, Ljubljana Fashion Week was held between 16 and 19 October. In the form of projections, eleven Slovenian designers or brands were presented: Almirasadar, Draž Knitwear, Ivan Rocco, LETOUT by Nataša Peršuh, Maja Štamol, Nataša Hrupič, niOka, PRINCIP by Mojca Celin and Damijana B. Logar, Simona Lampe, Tanja Zorn and the Young@Squat collective.

In the form of projections? That's right, and the first row, which is usually reserved for VIP guests, was dynamic this year.

Fashion Week was also different this year because the organisers moved it from a closed space to the centre of the city, to the streets, bringing it closer to a wider public. The relocation of Ljubljana Fashion Week signalled a fresh approach in the fashion scene. Visitors were able to touch materials at the LJFW PLAC in Town Square in Ljubljana.

SLOVENIAN DESIGNERS AND BRANDS

The collection of Draž knitwear found its inspiration in the photos of Borut Furlan, who photo-

graphs the underwater world. The collection was colourful, and the models looked like mermaids in an aquarium. Urška Draž said, "When designing, my brother and I followed the texture of knitwear and the photos. It wasn't always easy, but we're pleased with the result." Simona Lampe was thinking of a trip to the countryside: "When you're driving through the crowded city, you may relax already at the very thought of lying in the grass or having a picnic in the country. And then you look for something light in your wardrobe: a little dress, something tasselled or something made of denim." In complete contrast, Maja Štamol stayed true to her characteristic black, "It doesn't reflect my mood, but it's true that the colour of the collection represents my style." The Flower Destiny Collection is black, but it attracts attention with compelling details, the flowers, each lending its own tone.

And then, it sometimes rains – Nataša Hrupič sought her inspiration in raincoats and perforated knitwear, a game of empty and full space. For their inspira-

tion, the Young@Squat collective turned to Parisian women, symbols of elegance, and to Texas, a symbol of comfort; they also added a touch of Mexico. Nataša Peršuh also proved that combinations of 'opposites attracting' are trendy, since she combined sports and haute couture. She was also unusual in creating the basic collection and supplementing it with pieces by other designers. The Slovenian fashion brand which really defies the norm is PRINCIP. The collection was inspired by Ana, who wanted to get married in Zanzibar. This is also a story about what Ana would wear while socialising, taking a walk, at a picnic and at her wedding. At the same time, it is a story about femininity in a defined space. While PRINCIP visited Zanzibar, Ivan Rocco found his inspiration in the north, in Sweden. Different emotions, less southern, can be noticed even in the melancholic presentation of the collection. Nika Ravnik could be characterised as thorough; her motto is 'no waste'. She used every piece of fabric that she worked with. Her story evolved gradually – on the tailor's dummy.

Photographs from Between Heaven and Earth

It is more than 150 years since the first photograph was taken from the air. The first person to look down from the sky through a camera lens was a Frenchman; today, Slovenia too is proud of its artists of aerial photography. Among them, Andreja Peklaj and Primož Hieng stand out in particular.



Photo: Primož Hieng

ABOVE THE POOLS OF THE SEČOVLJE SALTPANS

Primož Hieng is a renowned Slovenian photographer, recipient of many awards and author of numerous monographs, including the one entitled 'Nad kavedini Sečoveljskih solin'. He has taken the photographs of the saltpans inspired by a desire to document through a camera lens and from the air what human hands have created through the centuries. His photographs reflect his emotional presence and convey a powerful interpretation of the saltpans from the air.

Art critics and art historian Iztok Premrov said about him: "For the last decade of his photographic creativity, Primož Hieng has been

intensively engaged in aerial photography. His artistic goal is focused on rivers, towns and interesting landscape areas, such as the Sečovlje Saltpans. His bird's-eye view photographs of Earth are intended not only to inspire enthusiasm for the beauty of the nature but also to enable the artistic analysis of interesting and picturesque natural phenomena."

According to Primož Hieng, the saltpans are a Slovenian wonder. His saltpan recording is special for the revealing of endlessly revolving and changing images and moods of the salt pan landscapes. This is a story about the times when the salt pans were still alive and cultivated by the saltpan workers, invoking a feel-

ing of coherence and completeness. The photographs were taken in a classical way, through an analogue process on a slide film; subsequently they were scanned and processed in accordance with the permissible deviations.

The saltpans are a Slovenian marvel and one of the most beautiful wonders of the world. While looking at the photographs of Primož Hieng, we enjoy the story of hardworking saltpan workers and we can be proud of this part of Slovenia. He reveals an astonishing and mysterious image of the Sečovlje saltpans. His photographs allow us to experience his impression and confession: the saltpans between heaven and earth.

The saltpans are a Slovenian marvel and one of the most beautiful wonders of the world. While looking at the photographs of Primož Hieng, we enjoy the story of hardworking saltpan workers and we can be proud of this part of Slovenia.

Photo: Primož Hieng



PLANET – LAKE

Its perpetual changing teaches me to exist here and now since, given the lake's relentless disappearing and emerging, I have to be prepared to catch the sight of a completely new image of the lake. I completely understand the thought that change is the only constant in our life.

This year marks 40 years since the camera in Andreja Peklaj's hands has become a magic key to unlock the door to the inner self and the world. Her everlasting inspiration is the intermittent Lake Cerknica. The silence, vastness, hidden corners, frog symphonies and birds chirping, waiting for the bear, butterflies and dragonflies, spiders' dream catchers, the most unusual and varied flower garden, the exciting and joyful socialising with fishermen while rescuing fish, friends around the lake ...– this is a luxury which inspires her. Andreja Peklaj says: "One foggy summer morning 40 years ago, I would never have thought that I would be attached to the lake for my whole life." And indeed it is hardly likely. The lake helps

me apprehend the synchronized vibration existing between a man and the nature with its rhythms. Its perpetual changing teaches me to exist here and now since, given the lake's relentless disappearing and emerging, I have to be prepared to catch the sight of a completely new image of the lake. I completely understand the thought that change is the only constant in our life."

For Andreja Peklaj, the decision for aerial photography was not taken easily: "In 1993, I realised that a vast collection of photographs would be more than enough to create a monograph on the intermittent Lake Cerknica. I had to decide whether to add aerial photographs too. In order to take my first tandem flight in a motorised hang glider, I had to overcome my prejudice against

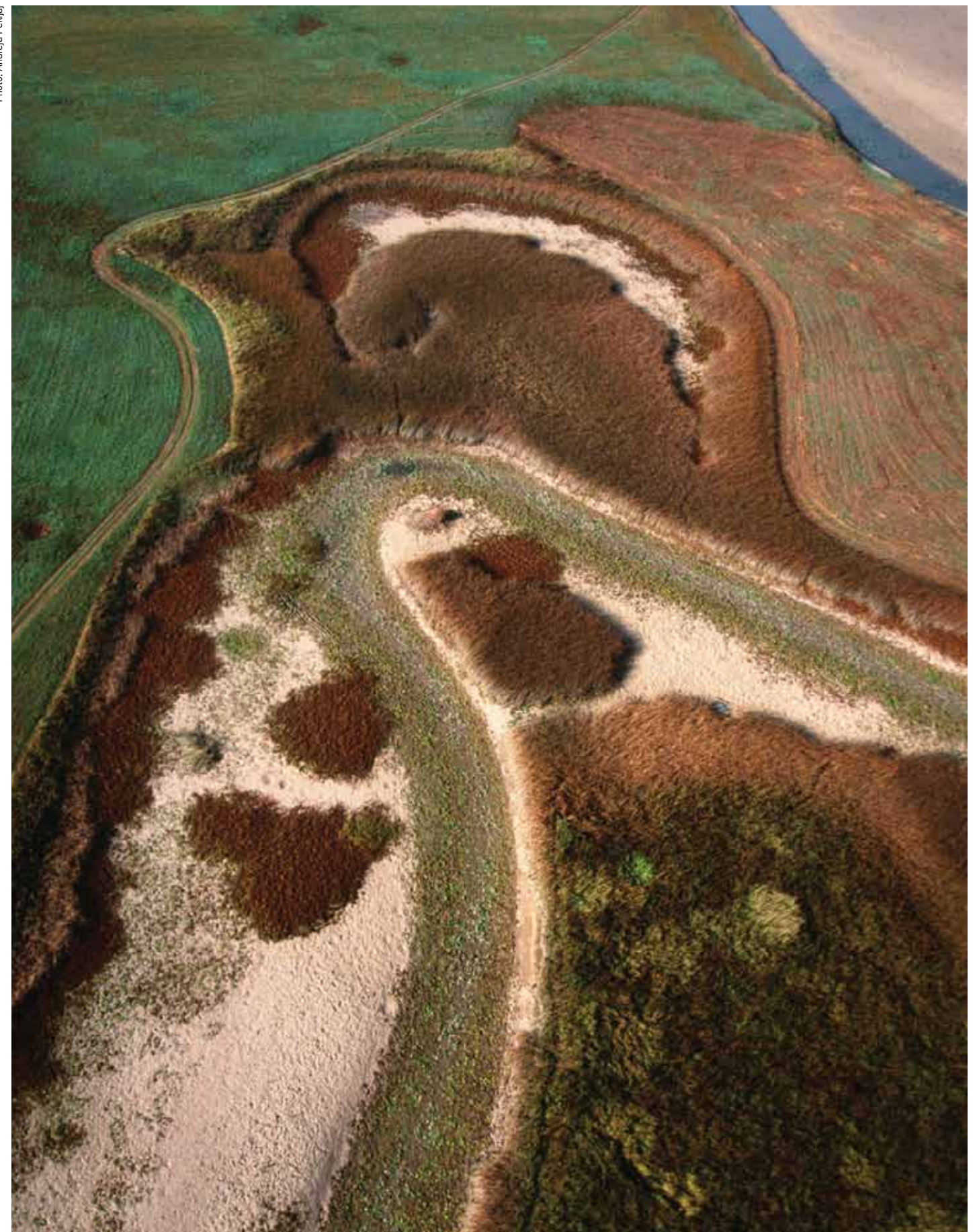
hang gliding. My confidence is an expression of respect for the pilot. During the flight I need to be as concentrated and attentive as possible since the motives change from one moment to the next. I have taken all aerial photographs by analogue camera on the slide film."

She self-published her first monograph in 1994, reprinting and updating it in 2007. In 2009, she showcased two extensive exhibitions entitled 'Planet jezero' (Planet – Lake) and 'Bila sem ptica' (I Was a Bird). She also staged several exhibitions with the landscape motives of the Planinsko polje (The Planina Field), Bloška planota (The Bloke Plateau), Prekmurje, the Karst, South Italy, Venice and Tibet. Currently, she is working on an exhibition about dragon flies.



Photo: Andreja Peklaj

Photo: Andreja Peklaj



The Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture Combining urban life, multiculturalism, political independence and advanced technology

Kino Šiška used to be a cult cinema in Ljubljana. It was a large, modern theatre, and already then, in addition to showing films, it served as a sort of communal centre of the Šiška district. After remaining empty for several years, the building was renovated five years ago and given a new role, becoming the Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture. A centre not just keeping up with trends but setting them too!



Kino Šiška

Photo: Ales Rosa

Simon Kardum's choice of best events in Kino Šiška: "The concert by the dream combination of Australian Dirty Three and Canadian Godspeed You! Black Emperor, which was the only joint concert of these two groups in the world. This year, I look forward especially to the exclusive concert, one of only ten in Europe, by the German industrial Einstürzende Neubauten, which will be dedicated to the anniversary of the beginning of the First World War."

Apart from the characteristic graffiti, the exterior of the famous building remained unchanged, including the eternal Kino Šiška sign. Kino Šiška's programme encourages innovativeness, creativity and international cooperation. It represents and combines urban life, multiculturalism, a politically unbiased position and advanced technology, while the architectural features of the building make it one of Slovenia's friendliest venues to those with physical and sensory disability.

Simon Kardum has been managing Kino Šiška since the beginning. Five years is long enough to make a critical analysis of this first period of operation, so we asked him what was the basic mission of Kino Šiška and how it is being put into practice today. Kardum explained that in its founding charter, Kino Šiška is defined as a multicultural cen-

tre carrying out activities related to modern urban culture in the City of Ljubljana municipality and elsewhere in Slovenia, as well as in the wider international environment. The charter also states that the centre's activities include music and performing arts and other forms of cultural creativity. The centre presents Slovenian and foreign artists and groups, productions and co-productions to the public. It promotes participation, democracy, plurality, international cooperation and high-quality creativity, presentation and interpretation in modern urban culture. "I believe that with 1,300 events in this first five-year period we have performed our given mission well, fulfilled each of the directives in the charter and even upgraded some of them. We will continue to upgrade them in the next five-year period."

KINO ŠIŠKA SETS TRENDS IN SLOVENIA

Simon Kardum is convinced that Kino Šiška is a trendsetter. "If we only take, for example, music projects, such as Indekš, Špil Liga and Ment, the centre gives the Slovenian public access to fresh, talented music groups and trends while offering Slovenian groups the opportunity to learn from foreign partners and nurture their creativity with trends from abroad, and to perform at the greatest festivals in Europe. These trends are about the interconnection of people, exchange of ideas, multiculturalism and cooperation."

The centre always stays true to its fundamental concept. Its vision remains to bring ideas and projects from abroad and present them to the Slovenian public and to encourage and support extraordinary projects in Slovenia.

Luka Dončić Slovenia's El Niño Maravilla

When the Spanish sports newspaper Marca, icon of world sports journalism and staunch supporter of Real Madrid - ten times winner of the football Champions League and eight times winner of the basketball Champions League - calls you "El Niño Maravilla - Wonder Boy", your career is set for glory.

Photo: Real Madrid



Luka Dončić

In early September, Luka Dončić, son of the well-known Olimpija basketball player Saša Dončić, at the age of only fifteen played his first official game for the senior team of the famous Real Madrid,

a team whose players and coaches boast some of the most famous names in world basketball. And yes, in that game Dončić gained his first four points for the "royal" club.

Luka Dončić (born on 28 February 1999) first came into the spotlight early this year at the Under-17 Basketball Tournament, where he scored (not yet aged fifteen) a three-point shot



Photo: Real Madrid

The Spanish media compare him to their “miracle boy” of recent years, Ricky Rubio, but we believe that a comparison with Kukoč is much more up to the mark.

from 15 meters against the Hungarian Székesfehérvár. Since then, the internet has been spilling over with videos of his amazing exploits starting in 2013, when he was proclaimed the best player at Real, which that year won the Mini Copa del Rey, the Spanish cup for cadet basketball teams. This Slovenian, who wears shirt number 17, was pronounced the best player of this year’s (2014) final tournament of the Spanish cadet basketball championship; he was also the best shooter and the best passer. In short, he has been awarded all the prizes a basketball player can possibly get.

Dončić, a product of Ljubljana’s Olimpija basketball school, first came to Madrid in September 2012 at the age of 13, following the path of one of the first stars of world basketball, Real’s centre Nikola Mirotić, who moved to Madrid at the age of 14 and made his career there. He was the role model on which the Spaniards

planned to shape Dončić’s career. He is almost two meters tall (1.99 and still growing) and his game is reminiscent of the style of the legendary Croatian star Toni Kukoč, who during his career with Jugoplastika and the Chicago Bulls achieved everything that can be achieved in basketball. Dončić is able to cover the whole court, see a gap in the opposition’s defence and easily make his way to the basket, if necessary pass the ball to a team mate, or shoot a three-point shot. It is practically impossible to stop him as he is able to score a basket whenever he pleases, with extraordinary grace and speed. The Spanish media compare him to their “miracle boy” of recent years, Ricky Rubio, but we believe that a comparison with Kukoč is much more up to the mark.

Although he is already considered the “new Goran Dragić” by Slovenian basketball fans, Dončić has yet to play for Slo-

venia’s cadet under-16 national team. He had already been selected for Slovenia’s team at this year’s U16 European Championship, but could not as he had to follow doctor’s orders and rest to mend his knee injuries. After he turns 18 Spain’s fans would like him to play for the Spanish national team, however, Luka has as yet never said anything about renouncing the aspiration and the right to represent the green and white colours of Slovenia’s national team. Slovenian basketball fans and enthusiasts are anxious to finally see him play for the Slovenia national team, as we have rarely had the opportunity to see such a talent represent Slovenia. Real Madrid, which has already welcomed two Slovenians – Marko Milič (2000-2001) and Mirza Begić (2011-2013) – is a perfect environment that could offer him the ideal conditions to become one of the greatest stars of Slovenian basketball. We wish him all the best on this path.

Ultrablues – how three buddies took on an ultramarathon

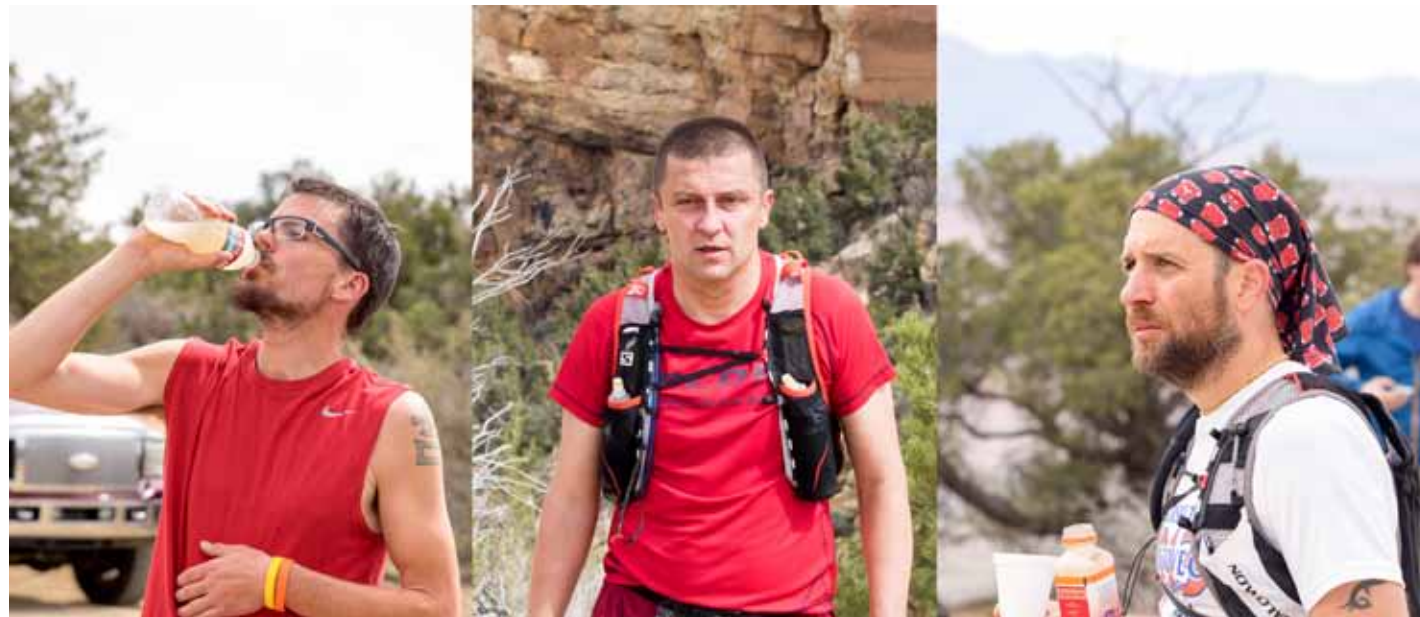
Three runners – essayist and publisher Samo Rugelj, reporter Boštjan Videmšek and writer Žiga X Gombač – went through eight months of preparations for a 100-km ultramarathon in the deserts of Utah, USA. In April, they took on the first such race in their lives in the heart of the American wilderness. After thousands of kilometres of preparations in all weather conditions and circumstances, they braved one hundred kilometres of mountains and deserts.



The book Ultrablues describes the journey from a daring idea to its realisation. This was not just about running, the body and physical strength. It was most of all a journey towards understanding of life and a maturing, which turned these determined individualists into comrades and

a real team. The book depicts the journey and development of three personalities, three pretty obstinate individualists, towards the core of their being and moving. The aim of the three authors was to tell the public how a person has to prepare for such a trial, which allows for no half

measures. The book takes its reader into the intimate world of three creative and quite extreme people following their life credo – to go beyond apparent limitations, to defy comfort and be a part of something that joins and connects.



Boštjan Videmšek

Samo Rugelj

Žiga X Gombač

Samo Rugelj: “Last year we got the idea to go on an ultra running adventure and write about things going through our heads and under our feet. We started to prepare, and all the time we kept writing. My two buddies and I gradually increased our running distances. We had run and trained through the months that followed, and in the spring we went to America to the start of a 100-kilometre mountain marathon. Somehow we managed to complete it. We came back to Slovenia in the middle of April and started to compile our writings into a book titled *Ultrablues*. Running and marathons have brought me new adventures throughout my life. Marathons are a sort of stage on which my life has been taking place in recent years. This year’s Ljubljana Marathon is no exception. Everything is already in place for another drama. I hope it has a happy ending, a lot of things are still unclear.”

Boštjan Videmšek /a passage from the book/: “We have come to the edge of the end of the road. So here we are, regardless of the team spirit. We remain dependent mostly on our own subconscious, the unmerciful tricks of the mind, which time and again present a person’s maturity with new trials. Wherever and whenever. The first kilometres passed and I was still crying. In sheer joy of life. In complete respect of creation – one kind or another. In gratitude. Like when you catch a glimpse of a gigantic ray in the Indian Ocean or a snow leopard in the mountains of Pakistan. Like in every moment of eternity I have ever witnessed. I was embraced by beauty. I was gently falling into a running zen. This is not a race, it is a journey.”

Žiga X Gombač /a passage from the book/: “An ultramarathon does not make us better, but brings out the person we really are. This is essential and summarises our feelings: an ultra bares you and forces you to face things whether you like it or not. This may be the reason why only a negligible percentage of people engage in this type of running. It is sometimes difficult to look ourselves in the eye and admit our weaknesses and deficiencies. But if we are aware of them, we are able to re-address them and try to limit them at least to the extent that we do not harm the people who really care about us.”

This was not just a running journey of the body and physical strength, it was most of all a journey towards understanding of life and a maturing, which turned these determined individualists into comrades and a real team.

Liffe – The Ljubljana International Film Festival celebrates 25 years

Each year, Slovenian film-lovers eagerly wait to take a cinematic voyage around the world at the Ljubljana International Film Festival. This year’s edition, marking the 25th anniversary of the festival, again attracted numerous cinema-goers.

Liffe is a festival with a competitive element, where awards are given by a professional jury and visitors alike. But it is not an event where one might expect to meet the big stars or encounter the latest Hollywood productions. Rather, the festival banks on young artists who are striving to establish a foothold in the world of film and who may one day become its next big stars, regardless of which part of the real world they come from.

In the words of festival director Simon Popek, the festival offers something for everyone. It is important, he adds, that “this does not necessarily mean conforming to the popular majority or arbitrary indecisiveness, but rather a tendency to select the finest works from as diverse parts of the world as possible”.

The festival takes place at several venues, with the Cankarjev Dom cultural centre being the hub of events. Other venues include various cinemas in Ljubljana and Maribor as well as the Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture.

This year’s festival was further enriched by a diverse fringe programme – a concert by the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra playing legendary Yugoslav film and TV series soundtracks, a seminar for young people with a series of multimedia lectures, a seminar with Irish script consultant Mary Kate O’Flanagan, a round table discussion about contemporary Slovenian film scenography, costume design and mask, authorship and author approaches. The exhibition of rare film posters is still open to visitors. The festival centre provided for the flow of information, meetings of viewers and celebrities, and special events for visitors.

This year’s Liffe programme featured 98 feature films and 21 short films and once again attracted an excellent turnout. This shows that the festival formula is the right one and that the festival is still on the right track 25 years on.

Festival Sections

Perspectives: official competitive section for young directors for the Kingfisher Award, sponsored by Telekom Slovenija, d.d.

Avantpremieres: major films intended for later screenings across Slovenia.

Kings and Queens: works by eminent and award-winning masters of contemporary film.

Panorama: festival favourites from all five continents.

Extravaganza: the so-called “midnight cinema”, for fans of daring, bizarre and titillating films of diverse genres.

Thematic retrospective “Big Screen”: films that should be seen on the big screen because of their particular audio-visual qualities (e.g. *The Red Shoes*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Wizard of Oz*).

Hommage: Alexey German, recently deceased giant of Soviet and Russian cinema, an iconoclast whose last film, *Hard to be a God*, shifts the frontiers of the film idiom.

Hommage: this year’s condensed presentation of an author who has received a fair share of festival and media attention is devoted to young Swedish director Ruben Östlund.

Kinobalon: for children from 7 to 14.

Europe in Short: competition programme for short films.



25 **life**

The Ljubljana International Film Festival