The first major solo exhibition by Alenka Pirman features an overview of her projects that have marked the Slovenian cultural arena in the last twenty-five years. The exhibition focuses on the complexity, conceptual stance, circumspection and frequently the immateriality of her works, which are often linked to various situations that are specific in terms of space and subject, to which she responded. Besides highlighting the artist’s approaches to the research and distribution of her artistic ideas, it also preserves her distinctive lucid humour.

The guide takes us around the exhibition in the first person, with the words of Alenka Pirman.
In the Lift, 1999–2014

I have been living in the same flat on the sixth floor for 47 years. I take the lift every day, and by now I must have taken it, let’s say, about 34,334 times. A ride takes about 25 seconds. So I have spent almost 10 days of my life in the lift. My fellow riders and I are usually silent, but not always. From 1999 to 2003, I wrote more than 60 dialogues. I typed some of them out and framed them along with a photo of the inside of the lift, and later we read them in live presentations in Maribor and Ljubljana. In 2013–2014, Tibor Bolha drew 38 comic strips based on the dialogues, which have been published in an album (available in the museum shop).

29. 1. / 17.00
There’ll Be Good Weather This Year! Workshop of phatic speech, conducted by actor and professor of speech Tomaž Gubenšek.

Photograph: Alenka Pirman
Details of the jobs that I have performed beside practising art after completing my studies have been listed on the entrance wall to the gallery space.

1989 graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, Ljubljana
1990–96 artistic director at Škuc Gallery
1991–92 editor-in-chief at Likovne besede (Art Words) and M’zin publications
1996–98 co-author and mentor of the World of Art, educational programme for curators of contemporary art, SCCA-Ljubljana
1997–99 assistant director at the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts – Ljubljana
1998–99 vice-president of the Management Board of the International Contemporary Art Network (ICAN)
2000–03 waitress and assistant at Klub Gromka
2001–04 editor and head of the Artservis web-based resource, SCCA–Ljubljana
2003, 2007–08 taxi driver at Rumeni taxi
2009 – co-editor of the Culture.si and Kulturnik.si portals, Ljudmila Art and Science Laboratory

Farewell gift from colleagues at SCCA–Ljubljana, 1999
The Ninth Coromandia, 2001–2009

*The Ninth Coromandia* was invented as a framework for certain isolated ideas and works. It is inspired by an encounter between two very different texts – the first utopian and anti-utopian works written in Slovene: Josip Stritar’s *Deveta dežela* (The Ninth Land) (1878) and Anton Mahnič’s *Indija Ko(ro)mandija* (India Co(ro)mandia) (1884), respectively.

For me, the Ninth Coromandia is a place, where artists are anonymous, where curricula vitae are unknown, where luminaries are not sought out as a shield, where there’s no need to churn out the batter of myth, where airports and streets therefore remain nameless, where the hard disks of the dead remain unrummaged, where people don’t give each other prizes and honours, let alone name them.
Untitled, 2007
hairdryer, table tennis ball, drawing on the wall

Abstract Form, 2008
bobbin lace

The Ultimate Word, 2014
hand stamped 365-days calendars for 2015 (available in the museum shop)

One has to … (with Darja Vuga), 2004
embossing

On the Tržič (Monfalcone) trim trail, a symbol for the more or less fit exercisers divides inhabitants into white and blue collars. Darja Vuga and I put the symbol on brass plaques, which we installed permanently in the ground at five “marginal” locations chosen by the local authorities. During the process, a few prints and rubbings were also made as mementos.

The Most Beautiful Poems (Silent Lectures), 2006
Naško Križnar, Drekec pekec, ok. 1966–2006
Ivan Volarič–Feo, Peščena ura, 1969–2006

The series The Most Beautiful Poems, based on concrete poetry from the 1960s, is a tribute to what was once “the rational poetry of the future”. I took the basic elements of each of the poems and translated them into time. The kinetic poem transforms readers into viewers and offers them an endless meditative animation.

On Vocation I, 2014
seven indigo copy sheets with typed text on the windows, reconstruction

The work is a reflection on the free choice of one’s vocation and the responsibility this choice entails. It is based on a text written in 1947 by Božidar Jakac, the first rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana. I typed selected excerpts from the text in several copies, and then attached five indigo copy sheets imprinted with the typed text on the windows of the balcony doors of the ancestral home of the Šubic family of painters in Poljane.

→ 17. 1.
The Ninth Coromandia: The Literary Utopia and Dystopia of the Slovenes, the first excursion after the New Year with professor Miran Hladnik.
The Domestic Research Institute (DRI) was created in 1996, when I was developing the project *Arcticae horulae*. It occurred to me that a fictitious institute could provide a frame for work that diverged from the usual methods of presenting contemporary art. So in the name of the DRI I carried out research, collected material, and conceived public presentations that counted on the viewer feeling confused: Where is the border between reality and fiction? Where is the border between art and science? In 1998, after a series of works that received a good deal of media attention, I decided I no longer needed such a tool so I “terminated” the institute and went off to Colombia with Maja Šubic.
During the exhibition *Please Touch!* at Razstavni salon Rotovž in Maribor, the Domestic Research Institute (DRI) organized a special prize competition called *Looking for the Slovene with the Strongest Lungs*. The vital capacity of people’s lungs was measured on some obsolete spirometers we had borrowed. The media were kept informed of developments during the contest, which ended with a formal presentation of the prize to the winner.

As the DRI report at the end of the contest stated: “One hundred and seventy-four visitors competed for this coveted title; of these 37 were women and 133 men, while 4 individuals we had to disqualify (they were non-Slovenes). Based on this sample, the average vital lung capacity measures 4.08 litres. The best result was achieved by 17-year-old Tine Kacafura, a student at the Electro-Computer Science Secondary School in Maribor. The vital capacity of his lungs is 7.5 litres. The young Mariborian has thus won the title ‘The Slovene with the Strongest Lungs’.”
In 1991, the secret dream of the Ljubljana-based SK8 Museum was to acquire one of Marko Jazbinšek’s discarded skateboards; back then, Jazbinšek was the finest skateboarder in Slovenia. Alas, as so often happens with bureaucratic institutions, the Museum was too slow. The Museum leached off art institutions all across Slovenia and attracted lots of visitors. After our successful Slovene tour (1991–1993), the Museum stagnated. The collection was broken up and today it would be impossible to track down all the separate items.

18. 12. / 18.00
Skate evening: Reawakening the memory of the SK8 Museum; with the participation of Jaka Babnik and Iztok Dimc.
The Ultimate Word
(The Ninth Coromandia), 2007–2014

I wanted to curb the violent presence of topics and words brought into my home by the media. I began to “count out” words from the lead article of the daily newspaper Delo and kept a record of what remained. Using a primitive algorithm (the first day I extracted every other word, the next day every third word, and so on), I hoped to distil the vocabulary down to the last word, the Ultimate Word, which would replace all the others and do away once and for all with the violence of the inessential. Perhaps not surprisingly, it took me three years to do this. In August 2009, I reached the Ultimate Word, which I carved and branded into my three kitchen chairs (still in use). The genesis of the extraction is stored in a bound set of “drawings” (2007–2009) and was printed as a free newspaper in 10,000 copies (still in distribution). The newspaper itself led to an interesting turnabout: it was designed by Ermin Međedović, a typographer and the art director of the Delo newspaper; he used the same typography he had designed for Delo in the Ultimate Word publication.
Ljubljana, the city where I live, had long been petitioning the European Commission for the honour of organizing a European Cultural Month (ECM). The endless complications caused much unrest in the local cultural scene, with the final ECM programme in 1997 proving that culture was a showpiece and a demonstration of our civic assimilation, which would one day be rewarded by Slovenia’s entry into the European Union. The highlight of the programme was Luciano Pavarotti’s concert in Cankarjev Dom on 4 July. The concert was sold out, but ordinary people could watch a live broadcast on Prešeren Square. My response was that of a citizen and artist with no involvement in the European Cultural Month. A month before Pavarotti’s arrival, I created a fake newspaper article and made 110 photocopies of it, which I put in people’s mailboxes and sent to select addresses. The day after the concert there was a second “article”. Both presented the famous opera singer as a supporter of the aspirations and efforts of our young state.
Une chaise électrique, 1989
sheet metal, plastic foam, hardboard, a part of a chair, wire, decorative chrome car elements, bitumen, protective colour for cookers, 65 x 75 x 20 cm

IN/OUT, 1989
hardboard, sheet metal, lead, decorative chrome car elements, metal slits of a post-box, bitumen, protective colour for cookers, 57 x 89 cm

Jackpot, 1989
printing sheet metal, wood, bitumen, protective colour for cookers, varnish, wooden gutter, 61 x 88 x 11 cm

Off Duty, 1990
chipboard, ironing board, metal plate with inscription, gutter from sheet metal (partly preserved)

Car Prints (DRI), original 1996, reprint 2014
car stickers, laser print

The car prints are based on the recipes published in the famous Slovene cookbook Slovenska kuharica, which was completed and edited by Felicita Kalinšek.

13. 12. / 10.00-14.00
Family print workshop on making car stickers based on the recipes that participants bring with them.
The project developed as it went along – from an amateur private collection of German loanwords in the Slovene language, through a visual presentation of the collection at the National and University Library (1995), and as far as a published art booklet in the form of a dictionary entitled *Arcticae horulae* (1997). The book attracted enormous attention and was sold out in less than two months. The methods I used (travesty, performative public events, etc.) misled the public into accepting the book as a serious reference work. On 8 January 1998, just three months after the book was published, the renowned etymologist Dr. Marko Snoj wrote a harsh critique of the work in the book review section of the main Slovene newspaper. For me, this signalled the end of the project. In 2005, an e-book and the digitalized archive were published on the Internet (http://www.arcticae-horulae.si).
Ideal (The Ninth Coromandia), od 2001

Upon my instructions, a hundred toothpicks were cast by hand in 14.5 carat gold at the Zlatarna Celje jewellery factory. They were modelled on wooden toothpicks. Each gold toothpick bears three hallmarks: the first designates the maker, the second the quality of the material, while the third is a certification from the Metrology Institute of the Republic of Slovenia that the first two marks are genuine. When they were first exhibited, they were wrapped in cellophane with the original “IDEAL” banner from the packet of wooden toothpicks made by the Velike Laščе Agricultural Cooperative. Since I did not want the work to be preserved as an exhibition piece, I quietly began selling off the toothpicks one by one. The work is thus disappearing: the last time it was exhibited there were only twenty-nine toothpicks left.

Butter On One’s Head (DRS), 2011
video, 4’29”

For the exhibition Word for Word, Without Words at Mestna galerija Ljubljana in 2011, the members of the Domestic Research Society (DRS) Damijan Kracina, Alenka Pirman and Jani Pirnat checked what happens if the phrase “to have butter on one’s head” is taken literally.

→ 26. 2. / 17.00
The two members of the society, Jani Pirnat and Damijan Kracina will guide visitors through the exhibition.
RIGASRS

Artists from Slovenia can be classified by various geo-political frames. In one variation of these identity mechanisms we can even be seen as Mediterranean! In 1997, an artistic trio of friends (Irena Woelle, Vuk Ćosić, and myself) were able to transfer this idea into research with the help of the Research Institute of Geo-Artistic Statistics of the Republic of Slovenia (RIGASRS). We came up with two bold initiatives: the first contributed to defining the typology and topology of the Slovene Mediterranean artist, while the second advocated the international adoption of a new unit of measurement, the Slovene Mediterranean Meter (SMM). This unit of measurement is based on the length of the Slovene coastline, which, measures 46.6 kilometres.

Slovene Mediterranean Meter, 1997
Close Your Eyes and Watch  
(Silent Lectures), 2006

Close Your Eyes and Watch exacerbates the investigative persuasive capabilities of the PowerPoint computer program. Using the program’s recommended layout, black and white slides alternate in front of the viewer by means of the “Comb Effect”. The software “combs” the empty slides and produces an Op Art-like animation. This, however, can be hard on the eyes, so participants are invited to follow the silent lecture with their eyes closed.

Are you able to overcome life’s problems? (DRI), 1997

survey, writing desk, pens, decoration

Close Your Eyes and Watch, 2006  
Galerija Kibela, Maribor, photograph: Alenka Pirman
Reconstruction of the methodological exhibition
The Case. Art and Criminality, 2005

Working with Biserka Debeljak, a long-time curator at the Museum of the Internal Affairs Agencies (today, the Slovenian Police Museum), and Igor Zabel, a curator at the Moderna galerija, I assembled an exhibition on the status of the document in the construction of a work of art and in criminal proceedings. The exhibition was based on materials from an actual case chosen by Biserka Debeljak from the collection of the police museum. The documents (indirect evidence, court records, crime scene photographs, etc.) were exhibited face down in display cases. In this way, I made sure I was not manipulating the material for some particular artistic or spectacular impact. By doing this, I also concealed the identity of the victims and perpetrator of the crime. I was interested in the evocative power of the authentic document and its importance in both artistic and criminal activities.

→ 15. 12. at 12.00 / 15. 1. at 18.00
Guided tours and conversation at the Slovenian Police Museum.

Free


The Triumph of Luciano Pavarotti: Slovenia Joins Europe! (DRI), 1997, collage, photocopy, edition of 110, reprint

Are you able to overcome life’s problems (DRI), 1997, photocopy, reprint

The Slovene Mediterranean Meter (RIGASRS), 1997, reprint

The Ultimate Word, 2010, publication, 10,000 copies

Printed paper bag, various designs, MGLC, 2014

1 € – 7 €

In the Lift (DRS), postcard 1 €

Alenka Pirman, Collected Works, exhibition guide, MGLC, 2014 2 €

Car stickers in four designs, 2014, car sticker, laser print, reprint 3 €

Car stickers in four designs, 1996, car sticker, laser print, original 7 €

In the Lift (DRS), comic book, 2014 7 €

8 € – 11 €

RIGUSRS: Contributions Towards the Definition of the Typology and Topology of the Slovenian Mediterranean Artist, ŠKUC, 1997 8 €

Alenka Pirman, Silent Lectures I., Close Your Eyes and Watch and The Most Beautiful Poems, CD/DVD, reprint, MGLC, 2014 10 €

T-shirts in various designs, M/W, MGLC, 2014 10 €

The Ultimate Word, hand stamped calendar for 2015 (200 copies), MGLC, 2014 11 €

12 € – 90 €

Louis Adamič, The Truth About Los Angeles, Projekt Atol Institute, 2012 12 €

Kitchen Skateboard, 2014, custom-made cutting board and two rolling pins 13 €

Alenka Pirman, Collected Works, exhibition catalogue, MGLC, 2015 25 €

One has to ... (with Darja Vuga), embossing, 2004 70 €

Ideal, from 2001, golden toothpick 90 €

All reprints: MGLC, 2014
December

Wednesday / 3. 12.
This Happy Day of Culture / at 16.00
guided tour of the exhibition, at
17.00 socializing at the base of the monument in the MGLC courtyard

Thursday / 11. 12. / 17.00
Alenka Pirman in dialogue with
Božidar Zrinski, Nevenka Šivavec and
Barbara Borčić, tour

Saturday / 13. 12. / 10.00
The visit to the exhibition is followed by a print workshop,
family programme

Monday / 15. 12. / 12.00
Reconstruction of the methodological exhibition The Case. Art and Criminality (2005), Slovenian Police Museum, Rocenska 56, Ljubljana

January

Thursday / 15. 1. / 18.00
Reconstruction of the methodological exhibition The Case. Art and Criminality (2005), Slovenian Police Museum, Rocenska 56, Ljubljana

Saturday / 17. 1.
The Ninth Coromandia, excursion

Thursday / 29. 1. / 17.00
There’ll Be Good Weather This Year!, workshop of phatic speech

Tuesday / 3. 1. / 18.00
Skate evening: Reawakening the memory of the SK8 Museum
February

Sunday / 8. 2.
Slovene Cultural Holiday / at 11.00
guided tour, at 15.00 presentation of
the exhibition catalogue

Thursday / 12. 2. / 18.00
Reading works – conversations on
selected artworks. The conversation
as part of the activities of ŠUM
magazine is organized by Galerija
Boks

Thursday / 19. 2. / 17.00
Feel, experience and react with us!
Performative guided tour, conducted
by Katja Sudec with the UPS Institute

Thursday / 26. 2. / 17.00
Damijan Kracina & Jani Pirnat,
Domestic Research Society, tour

For children and youth

Friday / 30. 1. / 16.00
KUL abonma, guided tour
KUL ART club for young people
from 15 to 25 years of age

Monday to Friday mornings /
26. 1.–6. 2. / 9.30–11.00
BOBRI Festival, viewing of
the exhibition with workshop
for preschool children

Monday–Friday /
23.–27. 2. / 8.00–16.00
PovezujeM – Tivoli Creative
Circle, holiday workshops for
primary school children

Guided tours for schools and other
groups / by prior arrangement

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