

The voice- Of Slovenia

Year 2 No 24 August 2002



Tom Kovac

Slovenian, internationally recognised and acclaimed architect Tom Kovac, from Melbourne & Venice Biennale.

Venice, Italy from 8 September until 3 November 2002

Venice Biennale 2002 – 8th International Architecture Exhibition - NEXT

Tom Kovac, internationally recognised and acclaimed architect and RMIT lecturer, will exhibit in three areas of this year's prestigious international architecture exhibition – The Venice Biennale. The exhibition will be held at the historical site of the Giardini di Castello and the Arsenale area, Venice, Italy from 8 September until 3 November 2002.

His innovative works, to be displayed in an international arena of excellence in architecture and design, have all been developed within RMIT's Interactive Information Institute (I-cubed), using the latest advanced software systems in digital modelling and in the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory (SIAL) where the physical model of his Alessi prototype was manufactured using the latest technology. The exhibition entitled "NEXT" will present over 130 individual projects by leading international architects including Frank O. Gehry, Rem Koolhaas and Jean Nouvel, and by other young, emerging talent all selected by the director Deyan Sudjic and an international panel of critics. NEXT will allow the unique opportunity to explore the shape of architecture around the world in the decade to come. It will be divided into sections; each of which will be dedicated to a particular form of construction or architectural theme:

Housing, Museums, Transport (Communications), Education, Skyscrapers (Towers), the Workplace (Work), Shops (Shopping), Free time (Performance), Public and Religious sites (Church/State), Town plans (Masterplans).

Kovac was invited by Deyan Sudjic to exhibit, in the Education section of NEXT, his design for the proposed Digital Design Gallery, commissioned by RMIT University for the Digital Design Precinct, a proposed collaboration between RMIT and the State Government of Victoria. The exhibit comprises both the digital modellings and physical model of the project, developed within RMIT's Interactive Information Institute (I-cubed). The sub-terrain structure was designed to be a centre of excellence to showcase contemporary architecture and design and the latest in digital technology.

In the US Pavilion, Giardini di Castello, Kovac, the first Australian architect to have been invited to exhibit in the US Pavilion, will be exhibiting his design for the New World Trade Center. The design proposal was unveiled earlier this year at Max Protetch Gallery in Manhattan, New York, along with the designs of other influential names in international architecture including Daniel Libeskind, Michael Graves and Zaha Hadid.

Explaining his work, Kovac says, "Digital technologies are profoundly impacting on all aspects of culture, and this has a direct response on how these new tools are used, and how they are transforming urbanism, and the notion of cities themselves. In our work we recognise that architecture and cities are process oriented fluid environments, which are redefining our lives, and our thoughts about conception of the environment."



Created at RMIT University's Interactive Information Institute (I-cubed), using advanced software systems. Kovac and his team mapped the complex organisational and human interrelationships of the previous World Trade Center, into dynamic spiralling inclining spatial interfaces, which challenges conventional geometrical definitions. Tom Kovac explains the scheme as "A continuing changing surface, all of which is unique in its shape and size and endless in its variation. There is an interaction between complex raw data of the previous WTC complex, its thousands of victims and its re-articulation into new spatial potentials which are now opening possibilities in architecture. The project proposes a public response that is not monolithic but is rather permeated with public space and programs at its base. Our aim was to create a memorial to loss so that the memories being honoured are retained and kept alive long after the events of September 11 pass into history."

Within the Italian Pavilion, Giardini di Castello, Kovac's design for the Alessi Tea and Coffee Piazza 2002 collection will be launched together with 19 other internationally renowned architects' designs commissioned by the Italian innovative manufacturer Alessi. Other designers and architects of the range include Jean Nouvel, Herzog de Meuron and Rem Koolhaas. The exhibition of prototypes aims to explore future design scenarios and possibilities, proposing the synergies and relationships between architecture and industrial design through experimental methods, styles and forms. The final collection will be launched in New York in April 2003.

An interview with Jerry Linenger, american astronaut

Dr. Linenger, as we Slovenians with whom you share your roots contemplate your unique accomplishments in space, Yuri Gagarin's anecdote inevitably comes to mind. When asked about his experience in space, he responded that God was nowhere to be seen. What were your own feelings up there?



When looking down at earth from the heavens - there was no doubt, absolutely none, that it was the work of our Creator. God is everywhere. I might add that my Russian crewmates had some religious icons with them, and I feel that they felt the same way that I did.

Your book, Off the Planet, is full of suspense, as you vividly describe adventures that very few, if any, persons have ever experienced. Why did you decide to write this book?

Mainly, so that I could leave something behind for my children; so that they know what their dad stood for, what I sacrificed, and what I believe in. I keep a chest for each of my four children. In each one is a copy of the book inscribed with a very personal note to them. It is my way of being able to leave something behind for them...

Among the questions I should ask is also the classical one, Why did you become an astronaut and how is it possible to become an astronaut? What would be your advice to the youngsters who look at the astronauts with such great admiration?

Basically, I always wanted to be an astronaut - starting when I was a child at 14 and watching human beings up on the Moon. I said, wow! I want to do that someday. To any youngster: just study hard, give it your best - and somehow things fall into place.

if you are serious about going to space - I would recommend taking plenty of math and science courses in school.

It's well known that we newsmen are usually very curious people. Does it seem to you that curiosity is also one of the essential traits which a person must have in order to be enticed into space adventures such as yours? What else is needed?

Curiosity is a great motivator—and is probably the characteristic that dominates my personality. Go out there and explore! Try new things! Other good traits to have are self discipline, the ability to finish what you start, and of course, good health and eyesight. When things get rough, as they did throughout my mission on Mir, faith in your own abilities and faith in God help to get you through the days... Knowledge which you so ardently accumulated by studying medicine and so many other fields, was probably very helpful to you. You yourself also discuss in your book the psychic and physical condition which is indispensable for an astronaut. Was religion, too, helpful in the preparation and execution of such an ex-



ceptional feat as your space flight?

My faith was very important to me. Also knowing that people back on earth were praying for me, pulling for me, keeping me in their thoughts. I actually had a tape of a Mass that was offered up for me in Florida just before my launch. I was able to play the tape every Sunday morning and in a sense "go to church." What better place? Up in the heavens, close to God, and celebrating Mass. I am a very fortunate person...

In the years when you were getting ready for your calling as an astronaut, you were also establishing your family. Your writing reflects a very great love for your wife and children. Whence this exemplary dedication? What does the family and parenting mean to you? Your book also contains letters which you wrote from space to your son John. What did you wish

to particularly impress by such communication?

You know, even after all of my great adventures off the planet - I realize more than ever that the most important thing in life is family. You do not need to blast off in a rocket in order to participate in the greatest thrill in life: watching your own children progress. As far as the letters to my son: to be honest, there were times that I was not sure that I would be making it back home (during the onboard fire for example). I wanted my boy to know what I thought of him, that I loved him, and would always be watching over him no matter what.

We laymen imagine that space flights are the most carefully programmed activities in the world. Yet, while you were in touch with a different way of thinking in Russia and then during your adventure on Mir you were also confronted by various human errors, shortcomings, and difficulties. Did you think about various human frailties, shortcomings, prejudices, or downright viciousness while in space? What could be done to combat them?

Yes, we do have our frailties - but I can tell you, God gave us two great blessings that allow us to overcome any difficulty: the ability to adapt and change, and the ability to rise to any occasion, given a passion for what you are doing. I learned a lot about my frailties up there—I have never felt so isolated and cut off in my life—but I also learned that there is something within each of us that allows us to overcome any obstacle, any hardship...

What was the hardest thing for you in space? Was it loneliness or something else?

Just being away from other people. I will never take my family, friends, colleagues for granted again. None of us should... **More than once you faced the danger of imminent death (e.g., during the fire on Mir). In your book you mention how by being exposed to such dangers you have learned things about human nature that you would otherwise never notice. How do you look at this today? Is death the end or the beginning?**

In my case, when faced with death, I more or less accepted it and said to myself: this is what it is like for us all. At some point we take our last breath, and move on to another life. It was okay with me to leave this world. The only regret that I had was that I had not left behind enough for the people I love, for example, I wished that I had written down something to my son John to let him know how much that I love him. I suggest that everyone gets their house in order along these lines: never be afraid to

let your loved ones know how much you cherish them, care for them...

While you were in space you directed much of your attention to the surface of the Earth. What were your thoughts and feelings then? While looking at the part of Europe around the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, did your thoughts wander to your grandmother and grandfather?

Slovenia from space, as well as from the ground, is one incredibly beautiful place. The Adriatic is deep blue, the Alps were covered in snow - what a very special place. When flying over it I would often think to myself: that is where my roots are, my place on earth... I also thought: I hope the people down there appreciate how good that they have it. What a spot!



When asked by Oprah Winfrey what was the greatest event in your life, you responded that it was the birth of your son. How do you look at life, creation, love?

Nothing greater on earth or in space than God's gift to us - life. Cherish it.

It is nice everywhere, but nowhere as nice as at home - this is what you wrote toward the end of your book. What does an astronaut do when he is again back on the Planet? What is your life like today? Would you like to participate in another space flight?

Some say that you must be bored now, but really the opposite is true: I have learned to better appreciate life on earth—simple things like the fresh air, green grass, birds singing. All of our blessings, and we often just take them for granted. At this point in my life - with four young children - I decided that space flight is probably not the best thing to do. Maybe when I am 77, as John Glenn was when he returned to space, I might reconsider!

From Dr. Edwrad Gobetz's introduction to your book we learn that you were very close to your grandmother Frances Dobravec Pusavc. What drew you to her? Do you think that you inherited or learned some of your traits from her?

My grandmother was one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. She sails for America as a girl, teaches herself English, and raises a great family. Hey, she was an explorer, an adventurer herself. I am just following in her footsteps!

You like Michigan. That's where Frederic Baraga, who continues to be well known in Slovenia, was active as missionary and bishop. Is this name known to you? Yes, I have been to some of the sites that Fr. Baraga visited. In fact, in northern Michigan, I was able to visit a church erected by the (immigrant) Slovenian community long ago...

You have already visited Slovenia and we hope you'll come again, especially now when we Slovenians are learning more about you and increasingly admire you thanks to the Slovenian translation of your fascinating book. You conclude with the observation that there are almost no limits to what a person can accomplish. At the time when this interview will be published, our paper will also introduce newly ordained Slovenian priests. What are your suggestions and wishes for these young people and for young people in general?

Leave something behind for others. Make your life count for something, and count your blessings everyday. If you are having a bad day and have a frown on your face—just take a deep breath of air, appreciate the carefree existence that we have on earth, count your blessings, and get a smile on your face.

Very nice talking with you, Msgr. Hello to all of my friends in Slovenian.



Lenarcic Gives Up 80-Day Flight Around the World

Brnik, (STA) - Slovenian pilot, climber and photographer Matevz Lenarcic - who embarked on a record-breaking, 80-day flight around the world in an ultra light plane on 29 May - came back home today from his unsuccessful attempt. He was doomed to fail when the Ottawa authorities refused to issue him a permission to cross the Atlantic, the 43-year-old adventurer told the STA. Despite all, Lenarcic said to be satisfied with the flight as such, which was faster than he had expected, the main problems having been related to bureaucracy. "I would have finished the flight sooner than 80 days, as I had made as much as three-quarters of the course in thirty days," Lenarcic pointed out.

After waiting 40 days in Belorussia's capital Minsk for permission to cross Russia, Lenarcic encountered similar difficulties in Canada, where the Ottawa authorities, in spite of the mediation of the Slovenian ambassador, revoked the permission to fly over the Atlantic just before the flight was due. Crossing the Atlantic with such a light plane was not permitted, but Lenarcic believes that some other solution could have been possible which the "rigid Canadian bureaucracy failed to find in so short a time". So instead of ending his adventure in Slovenia via Great Britain, Lenarcic left his less than 500kg heavy plane in Montreal.

Even if he has not succeeded in flying around the world in 80 days, Lenarcic can be consoled by the fact that he is the first to have crossed Russia in such a light plane. The pilot pointed out that he intends to repeat his attempt next year, but with a faster plane.

Croatia-Slovenia: Border With Slovenia Cannot be Solved Mutually, Croatian PM Says

Zagreb, (STA) - Croatian Prime Minister Ivica Racan made it clear on that there is no chance that Croatia would stick to the initialled Croatian-Slovenian agreement on the border between the two countries. "This was an attempt without legal consequences" and one which definitely failed, Racan said in a letter he sent to Slovenian counterpart Janez Drnovsek.

According to Racan, the "unsuccessful" initialled agreement cannot be the basis for the resolution of the Slovenian-Croatian border. The Croatian prime minister stressed that he can neither sign this agreement nor send it to the Croatian parliament. He added that he hopes Drnovsek would accept the fact that the initialled agreement has no legal consequences.

The border issue will require international arbitration, which the Croatian prime minister believes is the most sensible option, a letter to his Slovenian counterpart says. Racan also made it clear that he is ready to discuss the issue of arbitration with Drnovsek once he gets the necessary support from lawmakers.

As Racan told Croatian journalists, he believes that the two countries cannot solve the problem alone. Furthermore, the issue cannot be put off either, Racan pointed out and thus rejected Slovenian proposals that the agreement be frozen for the time being. "The Croatian government is ready to begin a new attempt to discuss the ways to resolve the biggest open issues between the two countries. This does not only include the border, but the Krsko Nuclear Power Plant and the debt of the former Ljubljanska banka to Croatian savers," Racan said in the letter.

"The wrangle and the forces of conflict are intensifying on both sides of the border and taking advantage of the open issues between the two countries, making them bigger and thus more difficult to resolve. We are faced by the danger of the spread of these bilateral problems and conflicts beyond reason, even in those fields which were previously considered to be problem-free," Racan wrote in the letter.

The top Croatian government official said that he was convinced such conditions damage the international position and image of both countries.

Croatia and Slovenia initialled the border agreement in mid-2001. Although it first looked as if this was a major breakthrough in relations between the two countries, the agreement was never signed or ratified, mainly due to widespread opposition in Croatia.

Poletna Šola – Slovenian Summer School

Robert Rudolf

This year I was lucky enough to go to Slovenia and attend the 2002 Poletna Šola – Slovenian Summer School. The University of Ljubljana conducts courses for students of Slovene as a second language over summer for 2 or 4 weeks. I chose to do the 2 week course. I left Sydney on the 28th of June and after a long 26 hours traveling I finally arrived in Ljubljana. I was very excited and also very tired. I slept through the whole of the next day, said a quick hello to a few relatives and then it was off to the school.

The first thing to do was to get settled into my room at the dormitory, which I shared with a boy from the Czech Republic. When the school started the next day, everyone did a short test to determine how well we understood the Slovene language. The school catered for all levels, from beginners who couldn't speak or understand any Slovenian, to intermediate and right up to advanced levels. I was placed in an intermediate class.

There were over 250 students from over 30 different countries who attended this year's summer school. There were quite a few school groups from Argentina, Canada and the USA. There were only 2 Australians this year: myself from Wollongong and a girl from Melbourne. Classes were conducted everyday from 9am to 12.30pm. There were 9 students in my class: myself from Australia, 2 Canadians, 3 Americans, an Austrian, Italian and Swede.

With both my parents being Slovenian I learnt to speak Slovenian from a very young age. I have never had any formal training in Slovene but I thought that I had a pretty good overall grasp of the language. How wrong I was. As soon as we started learning about slovnica, skloni, and pridavniki I was lost. I learnt that being able to speak the language and being able to write in Slovene are two very different things. It was quite ironic that we were learning from a book called 'S Slovenscino nimam tezav' because I was actually finding it very difficult. However, everyone in the class was at the same level and the teacher was excellent. She was thankfully very understanding and patient with us all and also very helpful. After two weeks I certainly didn't know everything about the Slovene language, but I did learn a lot.

The school isn't only about learning to read, write and speak Slovenian, it is also designed to teach us about this tiny but beautiful country and its amazing culture and history. Every afternoon activities and excursions were organized ranging from learning traditional Slovenian cooking, songs, crafts and pottery, watching Slovenian films, and visiting the Museum of Modern History, the Ljubljana Opera House, the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia and Ljubljana castle. We also went for a day trip to Primorska. When we arrived we visited olive plantations and Tonina House, learning about the life of the inhabitants of Istria in the past. We then visited the Secovlje salt pans where an experienced saltmaker showed us the traditional procedure for salt production. Then it was off to the beautiful seaside town of Piran, situated right on the Adriatic Coast. Here we had a tour around this historic town, and bathed in the warm waters of the Adriatic Sea.

The Slovenian Summer School was certainly an excellent and rewarding experience. Not only did I learn a lot about the language, was able to live for a few weeks in this truly beautiful and amazing little country in the heart of Europe.

Finally I would like to thank all the staff of the Slovenian Summer School 2002 for organizing such a successful program and also The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia for granting me a scholarship thereby giving me the opportunity to attend the school.

Slovenia's Galileo Most Profitable Mutual Fund in the World

Ljubljana, (STA) - Slovenia's oldest and largest mutual fund Galileo has made it to the top of Wall Street Journal Europe's list of most yieldable mutual funds in the world for the third time this year, Galileo manager KD Group reported. This is the fifth time in the ten-year history of Galileo that the fund has made it to the list of top performers measured by annual yield, and the third time this year that it has taken the top spot. Galileo was rated in 1999 as the top performing open-end fund in Central Europe by the Wall Street Journal Europe, while last year the paper rated it second on the list of top performing open-end funds in the world. Operating under the wings of KD Investments, Galileo holds the largest market share in Slovenia with about 46 percent. Together with the other two KD Investments' mutual funds, KD Bond and Rastko, it holds some 63 percent of the mutual funds market in the country. Galileo has stakes in many Slovenian blue chips, including oil company Petrol, pharmaceutical companies Lek and Krka, retailer Mercator, logistics company Intereuropa, food producers Kolinska and Droga, oil company Istrabenz and tyre manufacturer Sava. The Slovenian benchmark SBI 20 index has gained over 50 percent this year.

Historic Swim of Mississippi Closer Than Ever

New Orleans, (STA) - Slovenian marathon swimmer Martin Strel can feel the historic feat he is about to achieve. With arms feeling as heavy as boulders after 62 days of swimming, Strel remains defiant as ever to become the first person to swim the length of the longest river in the U.S.. His current position sees him three



days and about 215 kilometres from the finish.

After swimming over 3,500 km on a river which passes through ten U.S. states, Strel expects to reach the Head of Passes on September 7. This is only days before the U.S. celebrates the first anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the victims of which Strel is dedicating the swim to.

A strongly sunburnt face, leg and arm aches are testaments to the gruelling challenge Strel has taken on. The 47-year-old says he no longer feels the effects of digestion problems he complained of the last week. However, he is again not being helped by the river, the current of which is slow and not assisting swimming. At the finish line, Strel is expected to be given a warm welcome as a special event is to be staged. Among those to attend the finish-line ceremony are Slovenians living in the U.S., who were also present when Strel began his swim on July 4 in Minnesota.

Strel has also received an invitation to appear on the popular talk show of Jay Leno. He has not yet indicated if he intends to appear on the show.

The father of two is no stranger to marathon swimming, as he has managed to get his name



into the Guinness Book of Records before. In 2000, he swam 3,004 km of the Danube river in 58 days, while around a year later, he managed to break another marathon swimming record when he swam a 504-km stretch of the Danube non-stop in 84 hours and 10 minutes. Strel, a musician by trade who turned to marathon swimming in 1978, says he swims in the name of peace, friendship and clean waters.