Alenka Pirman

Selected Works

Ultimate Word
Ninth Coromandel
On Vocation I, II
Silent Lectures
The Case. Art and Crime: Methodological Exhibition
Untitled (Ideal)
Arcticae Horulae

Ultimate Word
since 2007

Ultimate word burnt on the artist's kitchen chair (detail), 2009

In order to tame the violent presence of media-imposed topics and vocabulary I have started to count out the words from the leading article on the main page of a daily newspaper. With the help of a simple algorithm I was hoping to boil them down to the Ultimate word which would substitute all the rest. Surprisingly it took me 3 years and the Ultimate word was finally obtained in August 2009.

So far the Ultimate word has been introduced in the following formats:

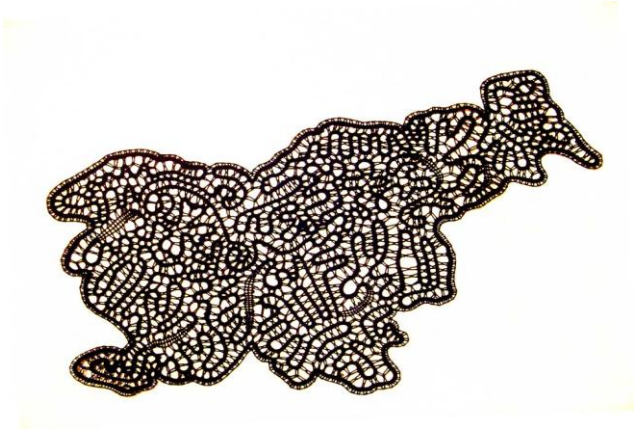
- Bound set of drawings (2007-09)
- Carved or burnt onto my three kitchen chairs
- Printed as newspaper ('the Genesis') in 10.000 free copies (currently in distribution)
  An interesting twist occurred: this newspaper was namely designed by Ermin Međedović, typographer and art director of the main daily, who has been for three years laying out what I have been counting out.
- Hand-stamped on the 356-day calendars (cca 40 items) for 2010

Lay out for the stamp (2009)

View of the kitchen with carved and burnt chairs (2009)

Exhibition: *Ninth Coromandel*, SCCA-Ljubljana Project Room, Ljubljana (2009)

Ninth Coromandel
since 2007



Abstract Form I, hand-made Idrija lace (2008)

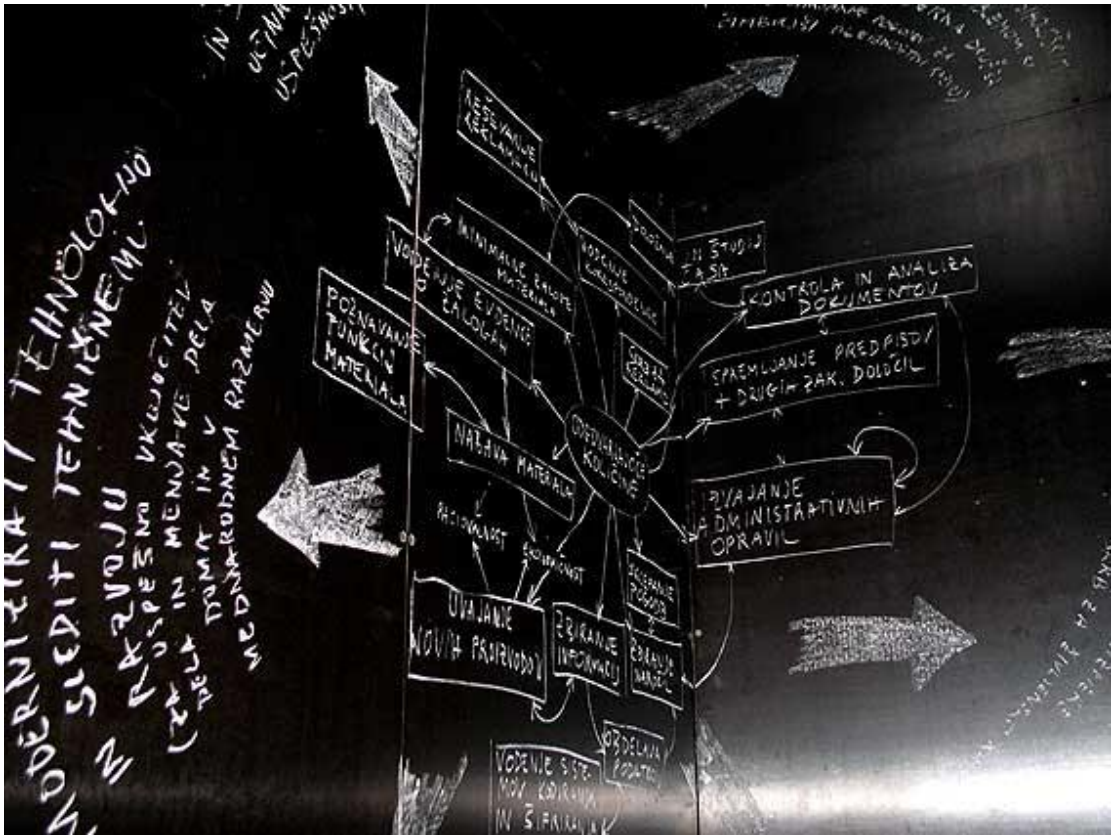
Ninth Coromandel has been invented as a framework for some isolated works and thoughts. It is inspired by the encounter between the very first two 'Slovenian' (dis)topian places: *The Ninth Land* (*Deveta dežela*, 1878), written by Josip Stritar, and *The India Coromandel* (*Indija Komandija*, 1884), written by Anton Mahnič.
For me, *Ninth Coromandel* is "Where the artists are anonymous / where there is no notion of curricula vitae / where no-one seeks authorities for protection / where there is no need for the myth production / where airports and streets have no names / where no-one digs through the hard disks of the deceased / where no awards or prizes are bestowed / let alone named.

Untitled (Oracle), hairdryer, table-tennis ball, pencil drawing on the wall (2007)
Photo taken at the *Ninth Coromandel* exhibition, SCCA-Ljubljana Project Room, Ljubljana (2009).

On Vocation II. Rog's Teaching
2006

Abandoned Rog Factory, Ljubljana (2006)

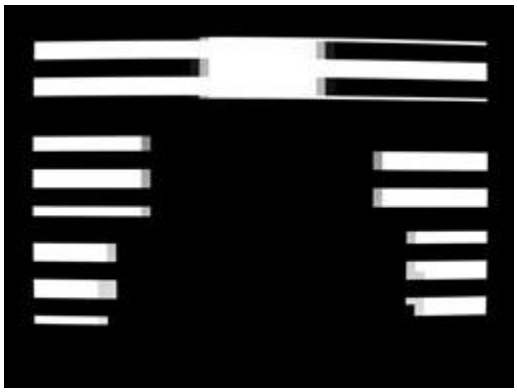
I spent 6 months working in the abandoned bicycle factory in the centre of Ljubljana. It wasn't really a squat but a common initiative for 'the temporary alternation of its purposes'. I discovered that there were two types of users – those who threw everything away in order to work and those who worked with that trash. Based on the found archives the exhibition was written directly on the black walls of The Cabinet exhibiting space. The specific jargon of economy and management from socialist to transition times (the archive contained documents from 50's till mid 90's) was a reach seam for the metaphorical reordering of the found material. The visitors had to use a torch in order to see the drawings. At the end the exhibition was simply wiped out.



More on Rog Factory: http://tovarna.org/node/106

Exhibition: *On Vocation II. Rog's Teaching*, The Cabinet, Ljubljana (2006)

Silent Lectures
2006

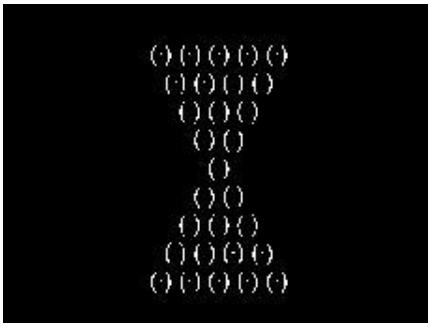


Shut Your Eyes and Watch, 2006 (screenshot)

Silent Lectures are PowerPoint presentations. This programme is being used every day to market principles, products, services or knowledge and is one of the most prevalent forms of persuasion technology. I have decided to use this tool as an artistic medium (‘the power of point’). So far two works have been made:

The Most Beautiful Poems series is based on six visual poems from the sixties. I took the basic element of each poem and translated it in time considering the characteristics of the electronic medium. The kinetic poem preserves the poet’s intention though it transforms the reader to a viewer and enhances the experience of the infinite meditation.

Aleš Kermavner (c. 1966-2006)



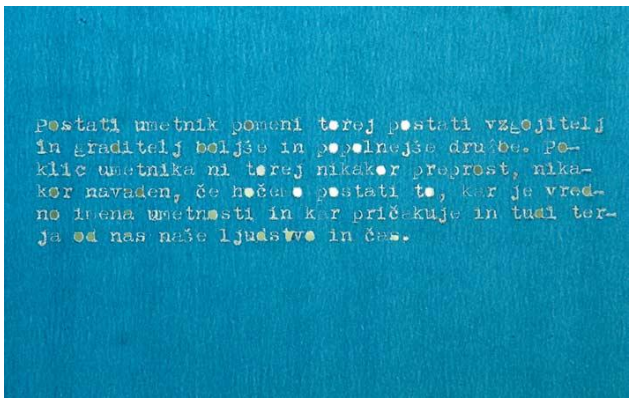
Hourglass by Ivan Volarič-Feo (1969-2006)

The Most Beautiful Poems series is my tribute to the 'rational poetry of tomorrow'. The chosen poems were written by Matjaž Hanžek, Aleš Kermavner, Vojin Kovač-Chubby, Naško Križnar, Ivan Volarič-Feo, and Franci Zagoričnik

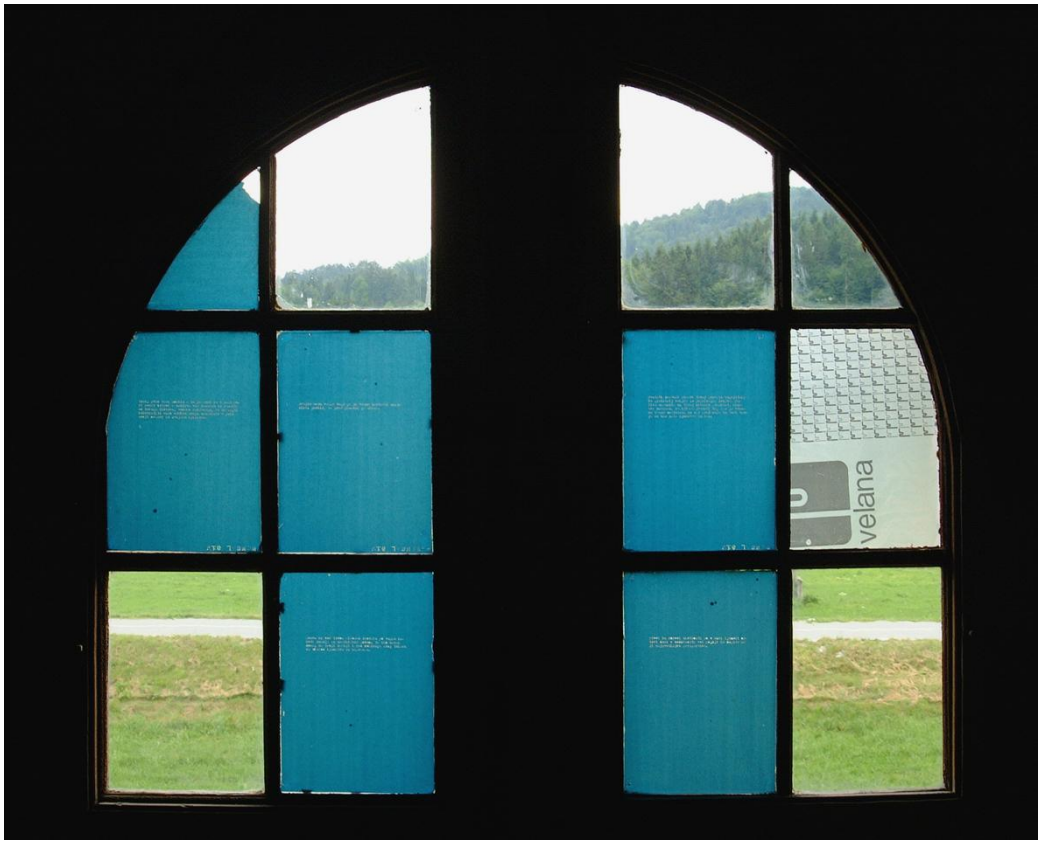
Shut your Eyes and Watch, however, is more radical research on 'unintentional contemplation aesthetics'. The PowerPoint animation presents a void composed of black and white slides, which maintain the structure proposed by the manufacturer. The animation is based on the rhythmic transition of slides through the 'horizontal comb' effect. The programme combs empty slides and produces an infinite op-art animation. Since this can be unpleasant to watch, the viewer is invited to follow the *Silent Lecture* with closed eyes.

Exhibitions: *Ninth Coromandel*, SCCA-Ljubljana Project Room (2009); *Caminhos Excêntricos*, Museu Collecção Berardo, Lizbona (2007); *Interrupted Histories***,** Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana; *Alternations / Shut your Eyes and Watch*, The Cabinet, Ljubljana (2006)

On Vocation I
2005



This work is a reflection on the free choice of one's profession and on the responsibility implied in the decision. It is based on the text written by painter Božidar Jakac in 1947. (The Fine Arts Academy in Ljubljana was established only in 1945. Jakac was its first dean.)
The text was retyped and the indigo copy paper was preserved. The five indigo sheets were fixed on the windows of the balcony door in the old country house in Poljane. The chosen technique derives from the copying of the documents during the WWII. The absence of the original evokes the secret and raises the questions of initiation, devotion, and abuse.



Installation view

Exhibition: *60 Years of Freedom***,** Ivan Grohar Gallery, Škofja Loka (2005)

The Case
Art and Crime: Methodological Exhibition
2005

From the crime scene (1979) © Police Museum, Ljubljana

The exhibition was a result of cooperation with Biserka Debeljak, a curator of the Police Museum (then called Museum of the Internal Affairs Agencies). Its point of departure was an inquiry into the status of a document in art and in crime detection and its role in determining the truth and defining the criteria for the truth. The exhibition drew attention to the parallels and differences between the ideas of truth and in the use of materials, documents and evidence, as they appear in art and in the work of criminal investigators.

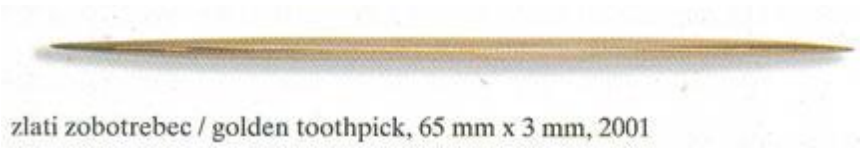
I have exhibited the material from the collection of the Police Museum (court records, documentary photographs, samples and objects) selected specifically for this occasion by its curator. All objects pertained to a specific court case, but were exhibited face down. The viewer knew the objects and a document were authentic, but was unable to learn any details about them. The case was thus not directly identifiable, nor did the exhibited material provoke fascination with, or an immediate emotional reaction to, the specific victim(s) and perpetrator(s). The reaction of the audience, however, revealed the evoking power of the authentic documents as such.

View of the Police Museum at the Police Academy in Ljubljana (closed 2001-06)

Views of the installation in the Mala galerija (Museum of Modern Art)

Exhibition: *The Case. Art and Crime: Methodological Exhibition*, Mala galerija, Ljubljana (2005)

Untitled (Ideal)
Since 2001


zlati zobotrebec / golden toothpick, 65 mm x 3 mm, 2001

100 toothpicks were hand-made from the 14.5 carat gold following the artist's instructions. They were based on a local model of a wooden toothpick and manufactured by a goldsmith’s factory from Celje, Slovenia. Each one of them contains three seals, thus proving the origin, the material and the authenticity of the artefact.
When exhibited for the first time, they were packed in the cellophane and wrapped with the banner IDEAL, taken from the original package of the wooden toothpicks as sold on the market.
Since 2001 the work slowly dissolves as I have begun selling the toothpicks one by one to prevent the reconstruction of the original work. Currently there are still 36 items in my possession.

From the conversation with Chantal Crousel

Chantal Crousel: Could you explain to me how you got the idea to make these toothpicks in gold?
A. P.: It was by genuine inspiration (although behind this might be a trace of personal mythology, connected to the toothpicks). I couldn't sleep for the whole night and I simply envisioned them. The next morning I ran around Ljubljana to get the estimation of how much they would cost. Quite expensive, it turned out - but the drive was so strong that I was prepared to go bankrupt in order to get them made. (At the time I had already left my job so I was almost broke anyway.) I started going through my savings etc, but the next day (!) a letter from the ministry of culture arrived, saying that I was awarded a grant for a project I had submitted a year ago and had totally forgotten about. There I had the 'seed money', then the gallery contributed a bit and the director of the Zlatarne Celje (the goldsmith factory) was so thrilled by them, especially after I told him that Corleone's oldest son had one, that he reduced the price for me. And here they are. I started to sell them just because I wanted to avoid the reuse of 100 golden toothpicks as an art object. Only then I realised that by doing so (and by working once a week at the bar) I could actually live on this odd currency for quite some time. My experience now is that the golden toothpicks are strong story-makers and only those who really know why they want one approach me. Even though I believe I will sell them all at one point in my life, I am not in a hurry - I don't make any PR or other marketing moves - they are just here, on my palm.
C. C.: And what does it mean to you?
A. P.: 'Holy grail'. The embodiment of the inexplicable in my life & economy.

Ideal, the package (August 2004)

Exhibitions: *Ninth Coromandel*, SCCA-Ljubljana Project Room, Ljubljana (2009); *Slovene Art 1995-2005*, Moderna galerija Ljubljana (2005); *Clementine Deliss, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Alenka Pirman*, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2002); *Moški/Male*, Contemporary Art Gallery Celje (2001)

Arcticae Horulae
1990-1998

The core of the project was my private and amateur collection of germanisms – words that have been borrowed from German and are being used in the spoken Slovene language. The collection was presented to the public in three formats.

→ In 1995 forty carefully selected sets of words were displayed in the National and University Library in Ljubljana. On the edges of the desks in the large reading room, little stands with linen flags were installed. On the flags embroidered in cross stitch, there were 294 words which have never become a part of the Slovene proper language.
→ In 1997 the whole collection (2094 words) was published in a book – a dictionary of germanisms, entitled *Arcticae Horulae* (Winter Hours). The title itself was taken from the first known grammar of the Slovene language (1584) and the whole book was conceived as a travesty. Much to my surprise the media and the public took it for granted – it gained enormous popularity and has been sold out in less than two months.
→ In 2005 the e-book and the digitalised archive have been published on Internet: http://www.arcticae-horulae.si/

The artistic process overlapped with the scientific domain and exposed the artist's responsibility. The artistic methods (travesty, performance) have deceived the public and converted the artist's book into a book of reference. Only three months later a renowned etymologist and linguist Marko Snoj published a severe criticism in the main Slovene daily. I consider this event as the conclusion of the project.

Arcticae Horulae, the dictionary, 17 x 11 cm, 1997

The installation in the reading room of the National and University Library (1995)

Arcticae Horulae was part of the *Urbanaria* project, produced by the SCCA-Ljubljana (1994-96). Since 2008 the artwork is part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana (*Arteast 2000+*).

Selected exhibitions: *Arteast 2000+*, Umetnostna galerija Maribor (2008); *Pretty Dirty*, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2005); *First Line, 26th Biennial of Graphic Arts*, MGLC, Ljubljana; *Vulgata - U3, 3rd Triennial of the Contemporary Slovene Art*, Moderna galerija Ljubljana (2000); *U3, 2nd Triennial of the Contemporary Slovene Art*, Moderna galerija Ljubljana (1997); *Arcticae horulae (Urbanaria)*, National and University Library, Ljubljana (1995)