

SLOVENIAN PAVILION AT THE FRANKFURT FAIR

Between the cultural landscape and the reflection of words

The book fair's guest of honour pavilion represents a synthesis between the cultural landscape and the reflection of words portraying the tradition of Slovenian language and the development of the written word.

The motto of the program and of the role of the guest of honour—Honeycomb of words—reflects the idea of connecting, integrating and exchanging ideas both in terms of knowledge and culture as well as literature. The motto refers to the cosmopolitan nature of Slovenian authors, who often travelled abroad and brought home new ideas, as well as to the geographical location of Slovenia, which lies between the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain and at the crossroads of four European language groups: Romance, Germanic, Finno-Ugric and Slavic. A particular literary environment was born out of the combination of all of the above mentioned factors and the rich historical background.

The design of the pavilion finds its inspiration in the idea of the motto and strives to create diverse experiences for visitors. It is designed as a landscape of words' reflections, in accordance with the natural features and economic strategy of Slovenia, while underlining sustainability, rational use of materials and the promotion of Slovenia as a green, healthy and active country. Sustainable approach was adopted in the choice of compact materials and the design of elements that can be recycled or reused. The concept of the pavilion originates from the idea of an integrated work of art, which is a synthesis of architecture, design, literature and cultural tradition. It represents a connection with the characteristics of the Slovenian landscape and cultural heritage.

The architects let the light shine freely through the pavilion, the seats, chairs and tables are placed so that visitors will be able to read books in natural light, relax and rest in the world of the written word, reading, sounds and smells.

Architecture, the tradition of design, art, education and reading culture are united in one representation, which permeates through the content, form, colour and many sensory stimuli present in the pavilion.

The Panorama Hall is spatially divided into an open exhibition area and two auditoriums that are partially transparent. The larger one is intended for events with around 120 visitors, while the smaller one is for round tables and various conversations with creators, publishers and authors (approx. 60 visitors).

The two auditoriums are designed as free-standing semi-transparent spaces of hexagonal shape, they are placed in the corners of the hall, and the open part is directed towards the natural light. Upon entering, the visitor sees only one part of the space, which encourages curiosity and the desire to explore. During the day, the naturally lit pavilion gives the impression of a vast book landscape, while in the late afternoon and evening, beams of light create more intimate, ambient corners.

The path through the open part of the pavilion is determined by "forest" bookshelves, "book reflection" elements and "canyon" seats. These elements are inspired by the characteristics of the diverse Slovenian landscape.

The exhibition 'Books on Slovenia' is located in the central part of the pavilion, which is intended to present books by Slovenian authors translated into foreign languages, published by foreign publishers, and books about Slovenia published by foreign publishers. The bookshelves are made of metal

structures and can be folded, reused or recycled after the event. They are designed to be sustainable and lightweight; with the form of elegant verticals, they resemble a forest, which metaphorically illustrates Slovenia as a green, forest-rich country.

The “canyon” seating set is a custom designed element that creates a strong visual impression with integrated rosemary plants and allows visitors to rest, converse, experience the artwork and read; it is inspired by the natural forms of the canyon and illustrates another characteristic of the varied landscape relief of Slovenia.

Above the central part of the pavilion, there is an art installation by the artist Eva Petrič with light and visual effects of 'lacy' shadows. Conceptually, it completes the idea of a library under the canopy as the network of floating lace is a parable of the tree canopy, and at the same time it reflects the richness of Slovenian tradition and the culture of handicrafts (Idrija lace).

The elements of “book reflection” are an interactive tool that allows visitors to experience the works of the featured authors, complemented by educational digital content and a virtual installation by the artist Vuk Čosić. The elements are a medium for familiarizing yourself with the presented book works, for example the anthology of Slovenian poetry in the German language *Sosed na oblaku* (Neighbour on the cloud), and authors or artists such as: Jože Plečnik, Jana Bauer, Evald Flisar, Drago Jančar, Helena Kraljič, Manica Musil, Boris Pahor, Lila Prap, Aleš Šteger, Goran Vojnović and Slavoj Žižek. Leading publishing houses in Slovenia in the field of publishing educational materials, Mladinska knjiga Založba and Založba Rokus Klett present didactic digital content for primary and secondary school students.

Pieces of furniture and equipment of Slovenian design are selected to complement the custom-made elements. Throughout the pavilion, movable furniture by both contemporary Slovenian designers and design classics, such as chairs by Niko Kralj, are arranged.

The coffee corner is intended for relaxation and socializing over snacks with a Slovenian touch, where visitors can have coffee, read a book or have a business meeting in a more intimate atmosphere that draws inspiration from Central European cafés.

The pavilion was designed by Studio Sadar, which is a Ljubljana-based architectural and design practice founded in 2021 by Jure Sadar. The office is working internationally on a range of design, cultural, commercial and residential projects.



