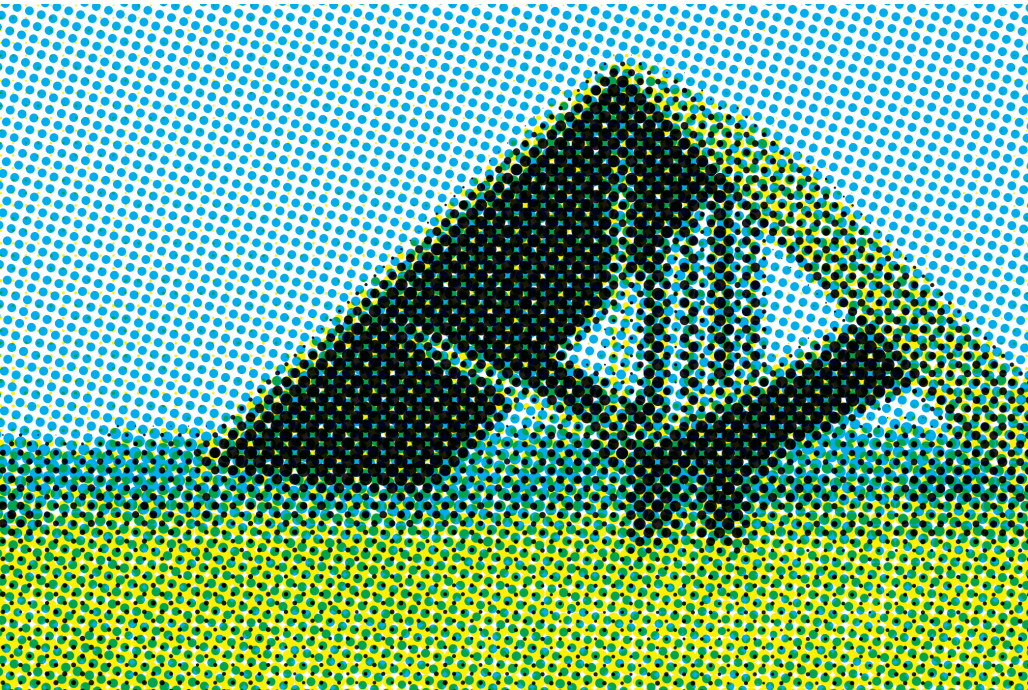


špela kuhar
robert potokar



Stories of Slovenian Architecture

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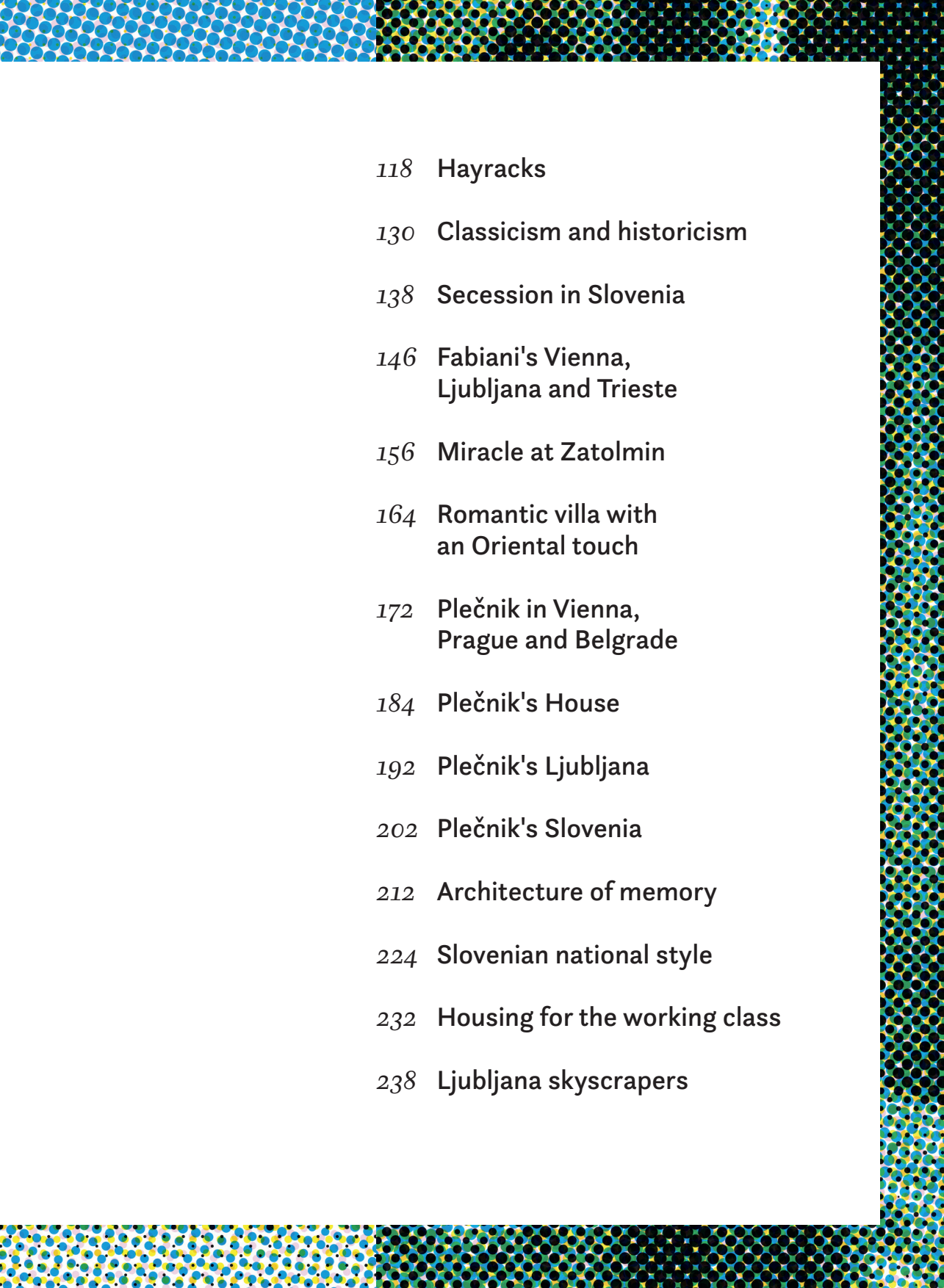
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Architecture = culture

*Architecture is as important
as the Slovenian spoken
and written word*

The idea of writing a book that would bring Slovenian architecture through the ages closer to a wider circle of people has been in our minds for some time. Every time a student or child of an acquaintance who wanted to study architecture turned to us for advice on reading material that would help them prepare for the entrance exam at the Faculty of Architecture, we realised there was no book that offered a concise outline of the history of Slovenian architecture in an interesting and accessible – yet

sufficiently professional and relevant – way. *Stories of Slovenian Architecture* is therefore the book we wanted to recommend, but couldn't find. In this work we have tried to select the most important Slovenian architecture through time and space, and present it to the readers through a series of interesting and informative stories.

In this context we should note that many architects have noticed that Slovenia is becoming characterised by bad architecture, which people often design themselves, without the help of professionals. This is not surprising, as knowledge about architecture, space and design is not part of general education here. The usual upper secondary school curriculum includes covers art history in the first year, but after that most students are no longer exposed to art and architecture in their studies. They also lack the opportunity to do creative work in the fields of art and architecture, except for those who choose such elective subjects or are educated at a specialist art gymnasium or a design high school. This is unfortunate, both for the students and Slovenia, as we are convinced that the creativity that comes from working in the field of art, which includes architecture, helps everyone, whatever their choice of studies, to think differently – more clearly and more creatively. There is no such thing as "wrong" in art, so the relaxation that comes from making art also helps to address many of the complex medical, economic, technical and other challenges that one faces in one's studies or in later professional or vocational work.

In *Stories of Slovenian Architecture* we present clear, concise narratives of Slovenian architecture from prehistoric times to the present day. Each story, with its selected buildings, details the time in which the related buildings were created, their creators and various interesting facts. The book does not intend to offer an encyclopaedic overview of Slovenian architecture, which would be overwhelming and uninteresting for a wider audience. Nor does it aim to give a final, authoritative historical outline, as we wanted readers to create their own

overarching understanding of the subject through the chosen stories. These follow each other in chronological order, supported by our choice of the specific structures used to illustrate each timeframe. There were many times when we left out a certain piece of information, because in understanding history we started from the view of the Greek god Kairos, not just Kronos, and thus also considered the timeless aspects of architecture, and not just the story of its historical development. The book is intended for anyone who is interested in the culture and art of Slovenia and would like to broaden their knowledge. For educators, in order to make it easier for their students to become acquainted with at least some of the most beautiful and significant buildings of a certain period of Slovenian history, and for schoolchildren who wish to study architecture or are interested in the field of architectural art or art in general.

Art can be avoided, but architecture is always around us! That's why it's important to be familiar with architecture and aware of how much it influences us. What is our favourite place, can we describe it, and what is it that makes us love it? Is it the light, the view from the window, the height of the room, the decor or particular piece of furniture, plants or maybe something else? How can knowledge about architecture help us design our own homes? The stories in this book also reveal that the best quality buildings were conceived and dreamed up by great architects who, in the creative process, responded to the wishes of their clients and made the space exactly for them. This is important, because someone who has been involved in the design of buildings since their foundational studies and truly lives architecture is more qualified to produce buildings than an amateur who thinks they can do it all alone.

One of the important issues in Slovenia, as a rather small country, is the protection of our cultural heritage. All too often old buildings are demolished since their owners have failed to find solutions and renovation options that are suitable for modern living. But good architects, some of whom have devoted themselves exclusively to renovation, can work miracles

- some of which are collected in this book. We would like to see as many renovations of old buildings as possible, as they preserve cultural heritage and strengthen the sense of national identity. Renovations are also more sustainable than new buildings.

Another of this book's aims is to encourage discovery and learning about Slovenian architecture at the sites in question, to encourage people to visit a museum or take a walk in the countryside at the weekend and see some of the buildings featured on its pages. Discovering architecture and space through direct contact leaves a deeper impression than simply reading about it, and both enriches our inner world and broadens our horizons.

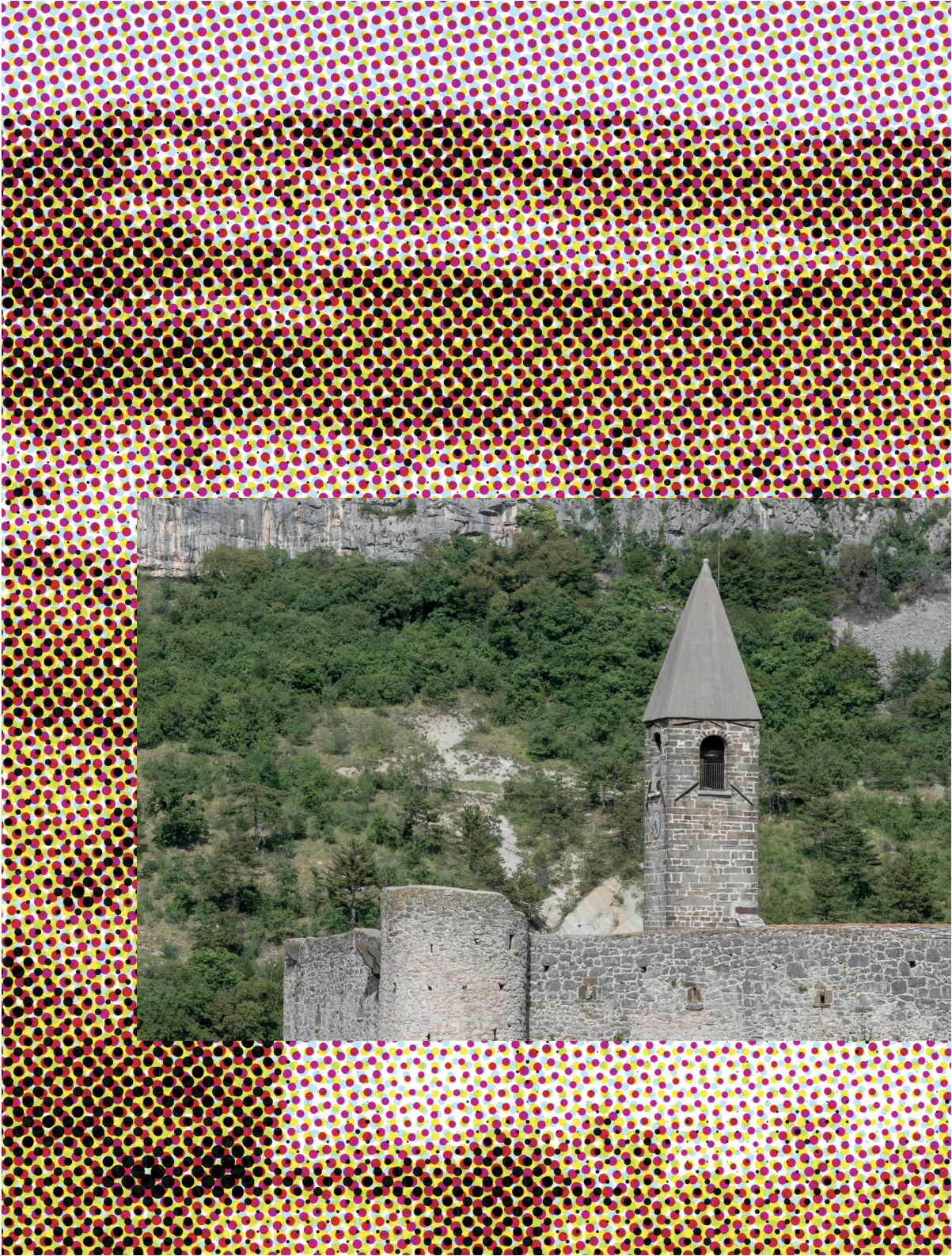
When we were designing this book we faced many dilemmas. How many stories to include to give at least a basic overview of Slovenian architecture through history, and with how much detail so they were neither too long nor too short? The stories needed to offer a broad view while highlighting interesting facts, and be written in a friendly way and in such a manner as to encourage readers to independently explore other books, magazines, journals and the extensive collection of online articles that is now available. At times we felt that we had to explain the wider, global context of an art style, as in the case of functionalism. For example, knowledge of foreign architects like Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe is crucial for understanding functionalism in Slovenia. The selection of the photographs was a big challenge, as we obviously had to limit ourselves in terms of quantity. If we presented each kind architecture or building with at least a few photographs, as would have been best, then the final volume would have been too large to handle. We also did not include maps in the book, as it is not intended as a guide to the country, nor plans and sketches, which in the past and still today mirror the soul of the architect who, as the architect Vojteh Ravnikar said, puts ideas and thoughts from their head onto paper by hand, or rather thinks architecture into being with their hand.

The present book should therefore be, above all, an invitation to explore a truly rich part of Slovenian culture. With our selection we have tried to show the importance of some buildings for the Slovenian space. It is difficult to tell everything in fifty stories, so there is still much that remains open and untold, and we may indeed tell these further stories if enough interest is there. We are aware that we have not done justice to many buildings and many architects, and the challenge of presenting contemporary architecture in particular is a great one, because the production of the most recent period is so large that a survey of contemporary Slovenian architecture of the last twenty years alone would require a book of its own. We have divided this last period according to the purpose of the buildings, but even here we could not cover them all. We would have liked to go into more detail on modern apartment buildings, as well as commercial, cultural and industrial buildings, but for the outline of contemporary architecture presented here we chose those relatively few examples that we thought would be of interest to a wider readership.

Students leaving secondary school are familiar with a number of cultural artists, but for budding architects the list often ends with Jože Plečnik. They may have heard of Max Fabiani and Edvard Ravnikar, but probably not about Oton Jugovec, Savin Sever or Anton Laščak, even though they may walk past the buildings they designed every day. We hope that the *Stories of Slovenian Architecture* will contribute at least a little to the understanding and knowledge of Slovenian architecture, its creators and, in the long term, contribute to the efforts to improve the quality of our common space.

Finally, 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the Ljubljana School of Architecture. Let this book be our modest contribution to this important event, as we both studied at this very school.

Špela Kuhar and Robert Potokar





Settlement culture in prehistoric times

From pile dwellings to the first planned settlements

Could we imagine being put today in an unpopulated area and left to the forces of nature for at least a month, with just a few basic tools? How would we handle it? Most probably we would start by looking for water and food, but with food the first complications would already arise, because today's man, used to finding meat and vegetables in stores, is no longer skilled in hunting and gathering, nor is the knowledge of edible plants something that many people have anymore. After food and water the next step would be to build a shelter. How would you build one if you were, say, in an area

similar to the Ljubljana Marshes when they were still a lake? Probably not much differently than the first permanent settlers in the area, despite all the knowledge and experience we have gained in the many centuries since.

Among the first permanent settlers in today's central Slovenia were the *koliščarji*, or pile dwellers. They built their dwellings on the banks of the lake. Mostly oak stakes were put into the soft ground, a platform was then built at a sufficient height from the surface of the lake, on which a hut was raised with a frame made of supporting stakes. At least one settlement was additionally protected by a double fence made of thinner wooden stakes. The huts were shelters, and for the living part of the structure the supporting stakes were interlaced with tree branches and the walls were plastered with clay. The roofs were covered with either reeds or tree bark. Each settlement generally had a small number of huts with an elongated floor plan of about 25 square metres. The floor plan was usually one room or a space divided into two rooms. Some huts probably also had a small entrance hall. The orientation of the huts took account of the most favourable orientation with regard to the sun, technically known as the heliothermic axis, which gave the main room the best possible exposure to the sun. All these findings show that man at that time knew nature very well, used it to his advantage and lived in harmony with it.

All these raised dwellings existed between 4600 and 1500 BC. For comparison, the oldest pyramid in Egypt, the Pyramid of Djoser, was built in 2650 BC. In the Ljubljana Marshes the older dwellings stood on the edge of the lake, while the younger ones were located more towards the centre, as the lake gradually dried out and became smaller. In the second half of the second millennium BC the lake became a marsh, and the most recent dwellings that have been found date back to this period. In the last stage of the lake, settlements on harder ground around the edge appeared in parallel with the raised huts, and then slowly began to prevail.

The first excavation sites for such structures in Europe were investigated by the Swiss historian Ferdinand Keller, who in 1854 – when the water level of Lake Zurich at Obermeilen was very low – was informed of the discovery vertical wooden stakes that had been put into the lake bed. He was the first to link these to ancient dwellings and then publish his findings. This prompted other researchers to start investigating such stakes elsewhere, and thus came further discoveries in Europe, most of them in

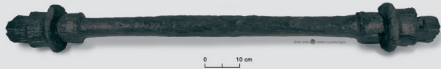
the Alps, Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and France. A decade after Keller, a settlement was discovered at the site of the Keutschacher See lake in Austrian Carinthia. In 1875, the Slovenian Karel Dežman was told of the discovery of the remains of a settlement north of present-day Ig in the Ljubljana Marshes. He organised the excavation in just nine days, and throughout the work numerous experts as well as other curious observers from near and far came to visit. Since then, around 1,000 sites have been discovered around the Alps with the remains of prehistoric pile settlements or settlements on wet ground, dozens of them in Slovenia. The last major archaeological excavation of a prehistoric pile dwelling in Slovenia took place in 2009 and 2010, during the development of the Špica area in Ljubljana. The excavation area was open to the public before the remains of the settlement were covered with soil again. Unfortunately, the researchers have not yet presented the remains of the settlement site, which the writer Janez Jalen, in his trilogy *The Beavers*, referred to as the Catfish Pile Dwelling.

From the earliest discoveries, these raised dwellings stirred people's imaginations, and they soon became a favourite subject for painters, who painted romantic images of life on them. However, after more detailed research it became clear that life for their inhabitants was in fact much more challenging than these artistic depictions. The pile dwellers' lives were based on animal husbandry, agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering, although they started engaging in the casting of copper objects in the early fourth millennium BC. Archaeological excavations have also found axes and other tools and weapons made of stone, antler or bone. So far, two bows have been found made of yew, the optimal wood for bow-making because it is hard yet very flexible. Interestingly, archaeologists have also found objects originating from what is now Italy and the Balkans, as well as from the north, which tells us a lot about the migration of goods and people in prehistoric times. For example, a jade axe found in the Ljubljana Marshes came from what is now north-western Italy. The people who lived in the pile dwellings also knew how to weave, and used the abundant clay in the wetlands to make pots for eating, drinking and storing goods. The distinctive pattern found on such items, which was pressed into the fresh clay with a double twisted thread and filled with a white limestone mass, was a particular feature of the area in the early second millennium BC.



↑ A vessel from the Ljubljana Marshes

→ Representation of a pile-dwelling settlement



0 10 cm



↘ The oldest wheel with an axle in the world

↑ Boat hollowed out of a single piece of oak trunk

← A plan of houses in the Iron Age settlement in Most na Soči

↓ Vače situla, an outstanding example of a bronze sheet metal product



Another interesting object from this area is a vessel about 20 centimetres high, decorated with the shape of a human figure with what is presumed to have been bird's head, which some believe could have been the head of a swan, animals which would have been part of the daily lives of those who lived on the water. It was found by Karel Dežman in 1877 at a pile-dwelling site near Ig (then Studenec) in the Ljubljana Marshes, and he believed that it was related to some spiritual rituals. The patterns on the body of the vessel probably represent clothing, and the motif may suggest the constellation of the Northern Cross or the Swan. At the time the vessel was made the marsh dwellers also made drevaks, boats carved from a single piece of oak wood. These measure several metres in length and some have a reinforced inside. One of the most remarkable finds from the Ljubljana Marshes was a wooden wheel with an axle, part of the chassis of a prehistoric chariot, which was found in 2002 during excavations in the area of Stare Gmajna, near Vrhnika. It is made of two six-centimetre thick ash planks connected by four slats. In the centre is a square opening for the cross axis made of oak wood. Further research has shown that it is more than 5,200 years old, making it one of the oldest such finds ever discovered in the world. In 2013, the City Museum organised an exhibition entitled *The Wheel – 5,200 Years*. Three years later, the find was featured in a major survey exhibition of Central European prehistoric pile dwellings, held in Germany.

In 2004, Slovenia responded to an invitation from Switzerland to prepare, together with France, Germany, Austria and Italy, a series of nominations for the inclusion of prehistoric settlements around the Alps on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The process lasted until June 2011, when 111 sites were inscribed on this prestigious list, including two groups of sites from the vicinity of Ig in the Ljubljana Marshes. Today, fragments of prehistoric dwellings can be seen in several places in Slovenia, such as in the Ljubljana City Museum, the National Museum of Slovenia and the exhibition spaces of the Fran Govekar Club in Ig. A new interpretation centre built under the leadership of the Municipality of Ig was recently opened that shows the biodiversity, conservation and heritage of the Ljubljana Marshes, with a replica pile-dwelling village built not far away, a learning trail, an exhibition and virtual interpretation of the site.

The Bronze Age started towards the end of the third millennium BC, although at present there is relatively little information available about its

beginnings. Apart from the remains of pile dwellings in the Ljubljana Marshes, there are also a few scarce remains of lowland villages. Most of the information we have from this time is for the Younger and Late Bronze Age, when the culture of urn burials spread in the territory of today's Slovenia, when the dead were burned and their remains buried in urns. From the Middle Bronze Age onwards, stones were stacked in walls in exposed places in the karst landscape and trenches were dug around them for safety. One of the most attractive castellated settlements – *kaštelirji*, or *castelliere* in Italian as they were called – is *Debela Griža* near *Volčji Grad*, where the walls were between five and 15 metres wide and the ruins even today reach up to seven metres high. As the elevation was only slight, the people who lived here had to build strong walls, even double walls on the most exposed flat area to the north and south. Hillforts were also typical of the Iron Age in *Dolenjska*. In addition to the smaller ones, which could be less than a hectare in area, there were also larger ones of more than 15 hectares. The largest was *Cvinger* above *Vir* near *Stična*, measuring almost 20 hectares. There was also a large and important settlement on *Magdalenska Gora* near *Grosuplje*. It was inhabited in the Iron Age, until the arrival of the Romans. Archaeological excavations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries uncovered almost 30 mounds with hundreds of graves beside the remains of walls, terraces and a moat. One of the most extensively excavated settlements from the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age was located on the site of today's *Ormož*, and represents one of the best documented early examples of urbanism in Slovenia. The settlement was located on a high terrace above the River *Drava*.

It was bounded on the east and west by torrents, and on the south by a steep terrace above the river. For greater security, the inhabitants additionally protected it on the east, west and north sides with a high earthen embankment and a defensive ditch. The settlement was extensive, measuring 400 m east-west and 380 m north-south, but remains have also been found outside the dykes and ditches. The settlement was divided into four parts by two perpendicular roads, one running north-south and the other east-west. The roads were four to six metres wide, fortified to a depth of 30 centimetres and paved with river stones. The houses were mostly closely spaced parallel or perpendicular to the road, but some were more widely spaced, and probably included courtyards. Numerous small or

large hearths, water cisterns and areas paved with river stones were found along the roads. The houses were wooden, with one to several rooms, often with a hearth in one of them. The shorter sides were 2.60 to seven metres long, while the longer sides were four to 12 metres. Holes were dug for the supporting wooden stakes down to the hard ground, some of them up to one metre deep. The connecting walls were made of interlaced branches plastered with a mixture of clay and straw. Larger buildings also had beams in the interior, perhaps only in the middle, some in two rows, creating a kind of three-nave space. Finds of artefacts suggest that people lived here in a similar way to the pile dwellers of the Ljubljana Marshes, and engaged in hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture and animal husbandry. Objects from the Younger Iron Age, from the third century BC to first century AD, have also been discovered in the Ormož settlement.

One of the most important Iron Age settlement sites in Slovenia is also at Most na Soči, which dates back to the end of the eighth century BC. The houses were positioned to take advantage of the natural contours of the terrain and to follow the directions of the sun and wind, with one corner of the north side facing the north, more exposed to the winds. The fact that the 35-house settlement was planned is also shown by its division into residential units on the eastern side and craft workshops on the western side. Traces of a street grid were also found during the excavations. The houses were rectangular in plan, some with a single room, others divided into two or three rooms by partitions. The wooden houses, made of logs, were built on stone foundations without mortar bonding. The remains of plaster have also been found, which in some places was richly decorated. The floors were made of packed clay, stone slabs or wood. The settlement was abandoned after a fire around 300 BC, but was later reoccupied towards the end of the Younger Iron Age.

The intense growth of new settlements in some parts of Slovenia in the Older Iron Age (or Hallstatt Age) is linked to the flourishing of the iron industry. The ironworks at Cvinger near Dolenjske Toplice are well documented. Iron Age society was already based on a hierarchy, and in addition to the upper classes there were several lower social groups, along with a clear division of labour. For example, farmers were responsible for food, craftsmen for handicrafts and merchants for the exchange of goods. In many areas the growing needs of the population led to an almost

industrial level of production. Craftsmen were also becoming more and more skilled. One object of note in this context is a decorated bucket-shaped vessel, or situla, from the fifth century BC, known as the Vače Situla, which was found in 1882 in Vače near Litija, in the grave of a wealthy warrior. It represents the highest artistic expression of the Early Iron Age in Slovenia. The bronze situla, which looks rather like a bucket with a handle, depicts scenes from the life of the nobility along with animals in three friezes. It may have been used for storing and serving drinks at important celebrations. The famous Vače Situla is held by the National Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana. Other such objects are on display at the Dolenjska Museum in Novo mesto, where 16 situlas have been found in and around the town.

In the Late Iron Age, between the fourth and first centuries BC, the Celts arrived and were skilled warriors. They used long swords, spears, shields, armour, helmets and two-wheeled war chariots. One innovation they brought with them was a chin-brace, which appeared in Italy in the late fourth century BC and allowed horses to be guided more efficiently in extreme positions. The Celts invaded existing settlements on hillsides, sometimes demolishing them, sometimes settling in them and merging with the indigenous peoples. They brought with them new tools, such as iron scythes, saws, hammers, tongs, scissors, chisels and drills, as well as new forms of farming, while their pottery was made on a potter's wheel. The Celts were also very artistic, and took these skills to the newly conquered lands. But despite the impact these new settlers had, Celtic culture did not achieve the great changes that occurred in all areas of life and space with the arrival of the Romans.

From Romans to Slavs

The Romans brought organised society, planned infrastructure, urban planning and architecture, along with a high standard of living

In 2016, the Municipality of Celje decided to renovate the paving of Museum Square in the city centre. Due to the city's rich history, any spatial development can be expected to encounter traces of the past, which is why archaeological research has already been included in the planning and timeline of the renovation. When they started digging, they came across a stunning find that every explorer would like to experience at least once in their lifetime. They found the remains of a wealthy family's villa with baths, in the shape of a square measuring 100 Roman feet, which would

today measure 29.6 metres. In the first room that was discovered, wall paintings were found up to a preserved height of 1.3 metres. Long ago, when the upper part of the walls were demolished, the resulting material was poured into the room to level it to this height. When the material was removed, very well-preserved parts of the painted ceiling were found at the bottom. Among the many smaller fragments a much larger part, one and a half metres in size, was also found. When the rooms were cleaned a total of around 55,000 fragments were collected in some 1,400 boxes, which the restorers will have to put back together before the final presentation. The basic colour of the walls was red, the most expensive pigment at the time, and the motifs are based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Researchers are not yet sure exactly which scenes are depicted, but the figures of Cupid, the Maenads, the Satyr and Pan are undoubtedly visible. There are few such well-preserved frescoes in Europe, although other fine examples can be found in Pompeii, Castellammare di Stabia, Ercolano and Rome in Italy, in Avenches in Switzerland and in Narbonne in France. Celje has decided to present the frescoes in situ, and thus on the site where they were found. Under the pavement of the square, which was landscaped and opened to the public in April 2019, the plan is to create a setting in which, once the restoration work is completed, it will be possible to experience something of life 2,000 years ago in one of the most picturesque Roman cities on the territory of today's Slovenia.

When Romans are mentioned in Slovenia, the first association is usually Emona, today's Ljubljana. But the city of Celeia, now Celje, was much larger, at least four times the size of Emona. At its height, in the second century AD, it had between 12,000 and 15,000 inhabitants. It was founded in the Hallstatt Age by the Celts and first called Keleia, then in the first century BC it was taken over by the Romans and called Celeia.

In the early days of Rome, before the years of military conquest, the Romans expanded their influence by sending traders and freed slaves to distant places. They thus spread both knowledge and new goods to people outside their original territory in Italy. One can imagine local people being fascinated by various novel objects made in a different and very sophisticated way. This is how the Romans gained respect and admiration, by bringing innovations that were not yet known in the region. Gradually these newcomers completely dominated the areas they settled in, surpassing

the natives in every field, and were thus able to conquer the land and its inhabitants with the use of "soft power" before their military forces arrived. The greatest advances made by the Romans were in the planning of infrastructure and the design of towns and other settlements. They made roads, bridges and viaducts to facilitate the movement of people, animals, goods, and water, and thus expanded and strengthened their empire. First military fortifications, inns and lodgings were built along the roads, followed by small settlements and then towns. The larger towns were built at the crossroads of major trade routes, the largest of which were the aforementioned Celeia (today's Celje), Emona (Ljubljana), Poetoviona (Ptuj) and Neviodunum (Drnovo near Krško). All the towns were similar, built according to a uniform plan, which made it much easier and faster for the Romans to establish their control in new areas. Often, however, existing settlements were simply built on and adapted to Roman needs, as in the case of Celtic Keleia.

Emona was built by the Romans starting in 15 AD, and was located on an exposed plain, something that may have puzzled the native population. But the location was very deliberate, close to a river, between two hills and with nearby springs below Rožnik. The Romans would also check the location of each potential new settlement or town by catching a rabbit in the chosen area, killing it and examining its organs. If they were healthy, the location was confirmed and the decision to build there was taken. Emona was laid out on a rectangular grid, with the main axes defined by the north-south (*cardo*) and east-west (*decumanus*) roads. The rectangle measured 300×360 double Roman steps (the *passus* measured 147.90 cm), which is 443.7×532.44 metres. The Romans established their own units of measurement, based on the human body – the step, shoe, elbow, finger. These units defined all building elements, from the basic bricks and roof tiles to water and sewage pipes. This made it easier for them to plan and organise construction, and so to expand their empire.

Emona was surrounded by a wall 2.5 metres wide, between six and eight metres high, with 26 towers and a moat of water around it. The interior of the rectangle was divided into 12 smaller streets running parallel to the main streets. These divided the town into rectangular residential islands, or *insulae*, with mostly one or two-storey houses. The houses were oriented inwards, and had open and partially covered atriums (*atria*),



- ← The remains of a fresco from a Roman villa under Museum Square in Celje
- ↓ Roman necropolis in Šempeter in the Savinja Valley
- ✓ The largest tomb is that of the Spektaci family
- ✓ Tourist Information Centre in the Main Square in Celje
- ↓ Interior of the Information Centre with a display of archaeological excavations





↑ Model of a reconstruction of Emona

← The reconstruction of the southern Roman Wall at Mirje in Ljubljana is the work of the architect Jože Plečnik

↓ The Early Christian Centre Archaeological Park on Erjavčeva Street in Ljubljana



usually with a low basin in the centre into which water flowed from the roofs and was then channelled to a reservoir below ground. The wealthier inhabitants had larger houses, often with two atriums, while the less wealthy had smaller ones. These houses often had shops or craft workshops at their entrances. The poorest lived in blocks of flats. In the centre of the town, at the intersection of the two main streets, was a central space, the Forum, surrounded by administrative and other public buildings, such as the council chamber, court, dungeon, sanctuary and shops. The dead were buried at the entrances to the city. During the renovation of Gosposvetská Street in 2018 and 2019, some 350 graves were found, including 50 stone sarcophagi from the fourth century, which were taken to the City Museum's depositories.

The most beautiful remains of Roman tombstones in Slovenia can be seen in the Roman Necropolis, an open-air lapidary in Šempeter in the Savinja Valley. Šempeter was an important Roman route from Aquileia (today's Oglea), Emona, and Celeia to Poetovione. As it was only 10 kilometres from Celeia, many of the local nobles had estates here and built their family tombs in the necropolis. In 1952, while working in an orchard, locals came across a statue of a seated woman, which led to extensive archaeological excavations that lasted until 1956. More than 100 tombs were excavated, the most beautiful monuments with rich reliefs are carved out of light-coloured Pohorje marble, which was mined in a quarry near Slovenska Bistrica. The largest tomb – built for the family of the mayor of Celeia, Gaius Spectius Finito – is more than eight metres high. In addition to this fine example, there are three other large tombs in the lapidarium, all with a niche in the lower part in which the ashes of the deceased were placed. The rich cremated their dead, except for children, until the end of the third century AD. A few small tombstones can also be seen in the lapidarium, but most of those which were found are now kept in the Regional Museum in Celje.

Tangible evidence of the Romans' time here can also be found in several other places, and the most extensive display of the remains of Roman Celeia are in the cellar of the Prince's Court. Parts of the Roman road with a defensive tower, the walls of a Roman villa, a pottery kiln, a large-scale female statue and a male torso in armour, both made of marble, have been preserved in their original locations, as well as many other fragments. In

2016, a Tourist Information Centre with a pavilion for the presentation of archaeology was completed in Celje's Main Square, designed by architect Nande Korpnik. The mosaics which constitute the main museum element were found during archaeological excavations in 2013, when two large villas with a floor plan of 30 metres wide and 90 metres long were unearthed. The architect chose to create a transparent glass ground-floor cube with visible structural elements that clearly distinguish the old from the new. This design also means that visitors can see some of the remains of local Roman culture, which are more than 2,000 years old, through the glass from the outside. Or they can enter the building, where they can first take a closer look at the 60 square metres of mosaics and villa walls, and then walk to the information centre or to the museum section in the basement. In Ljubljana, the remains of Emona can be seen in ten locations. The City Museum has linked them in a circular route, and visitors can see all or just a selection of them. The journey starts at the City Museum, where the Roman road, Roman fountain and various objects found in the area are still visible in the basement. In the Emona House from the late fourth and early fifth centuries in nearby Trnovo, the remains of a Roman villa that once belonged to a wealthy family are on display, including part of a mosaic and a heating system. From the same period is the residential villa in the Early Christian Centre Archaeological Park on Erjavčeva Street in Ljubljana, where a baptistery with a baptismal pool was built alongside the central courtyard, with a covered corridor and a beautifully preserved multicoloured mosaic next to the baptismal pool. Both the Emona House and Old Christian Sanctuary were designed for visitors by the Stratum architectural office, with pathways, roofs and associated infrastructure. It is a beautiful and restrained arrangement that foregrounds the archaeological excavations and complements them in an unobtrusive way. Original witnesses to the past are also on display at the National Museum, where Roman tombstones and sarcophagi are kept in the main museum building and in a glass lapidarium in the garden. The remains of the southern Roman wall were rebuilt in the 1930s by the architect Jože Plečnik in his distinctive style. He added a new wall on top of the original one, which he marked with a line of pebbles, added a vaulted lapidarium displaying ancient finds from the surrounding area, and columns and a pyramid to mark and open two new passages to the south. The pyramid is an Egyptian



- ↘ The Orpheus Monument on Slovenski Square in Ptuj is almost five metres high
- ↑ The Sanctuary of Mithras, mithraeum I, in Spodnja Hajdina near Ptuj
- ↑ Remains of the late antique settlement of Ajdovski gradec above Vranje near Sevnica

element, but Plečnik used it for his free interpretation of the archaeological park. At the time of its creation he was criticised for taking too much liberty with the design. The pyramid was originally covered with soil from which grass grew, but this was later fully removed because the soil kept being washed away by rain.

In Ptuj the remains of a medieval castle, dating back to the 11th century, are still visible as a testimony to the administrative power of what was once the most important Roman city on the territory of today's Slovenia. The most interesting monument from those very early days, which stands in the very centre of the town on Slovenian Square, is a stone tombstone called the Orpheus Monument, dedicated to the Roman mayor, Marcus Valerius Vero, and depicting in relief, among other motifs, a scene from the myth of Orpheus, mourning his beloved Eurydice and playing the lute. A unique feature of Roman Ptuj are the mithraea, shrines of the Persian religion of Mithraism, which was brought north by soldiers from the Middle East. Five of these have been discovered in the wider area of Ptuj, three of which are open to the public: mithraeum I is in Spodnja Hajdina, mithraeum III is in the southern part of Ptuj on Ulica k Mitreju (which means "the street leading to the mithraeum"), and mithraeum V is in the Hotel Mitra (with mitra meaning mithraeum in Slovene). Individual fragments from the Roman period are kept in the Ptuj Regional Museum in Ormož. Another interesting feature from the Roman period are the villae rusticae, the country estates of wealthy Roman settlers. The remains of a typical villa rustica can be seen in the archaeological park in Radvanje near Maribor. The entire complex was enclosed by a wall measuring 98.10 × 90.20 metres. The residential part was located in the north-western part of the complex, separated from the commercial part by several outbuildings in the south-eastern part. The buildings were set against the perimeter wall. Excavations also uncovered a burial mound with 28 graves in the complex. To date, archaeologists have discovered the remains of more than 200 such villas in Slovenia.

One of the most interesting and partially preserved sites of the Roman period in Slovenia are the remains of the Castra military fortress in present-day Ajdovščina, where a fortification with 14 towers has been preserved over the centuries, although there may once have been as many as 16, according to the latest speculations. The Roman fortress dates back to 270

AD, and in 394 a famous battle between the Roman Emperor Theodosius and the rebel Eugenius took place nearby. The bora wind is said to have reversed the direction of the arrows and helped Emperor Theodosius to victory.

There are many other fragments from the Roman period in Slovenia, some of which have been re-presented at their original sites, such as in Neviodunum, now Drnovo near Krško, or exhibited in various museums. However, many such testimonies to the ancient world are still hidden underground, their presence having become increasingly blurred over the centuries. Still, with each new excavation in the town centres where we know that the Romans built their dwellings or military outposts, new discoveries can be expected to add to the knowledge of this extremely fertile and fascinating period.

The Roman era on the territory of today's Slovenia ended after 400 AD, when tribes from the north – first the Goths, then the Langobards – began to sack the former cities and settlements, soon retreating from the Avars and Slavs to what is now northern Italy. The new tribes came from a climate far more inhospitable than that of their predecessors, the Romans, which meant that they had to concentrate all their energies on bare survival. They did not develop a culture of subsistence to provide for their basic needs, and when they encountered the world of the Romans they found it so different that they often made new settlements rather than adapt to existing ones. Perhaps – of course, we can only speculate – they felt threatened and confined behind the closed walls of the Roman atriums? Some tribes, such as the Goths, who like the Celts before them had already developed their own patterns of living, found it easier to blend into the existing Roman culture and did not disrupt it as much as the Slavs who came after them. At a time when the Slavs had already begun to ravage the land, the indigenous Romans, because of the new dangers they faced, built their settlements in places that were difficult to reach and hidden. These settlements were very primitive, and everything was adapted to defend against invaders. There are more than 30 remains of such settlements from that time on the land of today's Slovenia, the better preserved sites are Ajdna above Jesenice, Rifnik near Šentjur, and Tonovcov Castle near Kobarid, while the most studied settlement is Ajdovski gradec above Vranje near Sevnica. The settlement, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, was

surrounded by a wall, with two simple churches at the top of the hill. The houses were built of stones and covered with shingles or thatch, and were seemingly placed randomly on the hillside. Some of the houses were set against the surrounding wall. They also had a water reservoir into which water flowed down from the roofs. The dead were buried along the path in front of the walls, following the Roman model. Today, the archaeological site contains traces of the surrounding wall, part of one of the defensive towers and the remains of the walls of some of the homes.

Not all settlements moved to higher altitudes during the migration of peoples. In Kranj, for example, there is evidence of an earlier structure from the sixth century on the site of the present-day St Cantius Church, where a baptistery was built next to a late antique or early Christian church, the foundations of which are preserved below the ground level. In addition to the church site, archaeologists have discovered a burial site on the terrace above the Sava River at Lajh, where the skeletons of the indigenous population, as well as settlers from the East Goths and Langobards, have been found.

Not much material evidence of the Slavs has survived, as they built wooden houses similar to those from prehistoric times. We can only imagine their way of life and marvel at the huge gap between the already very advanced culture of the Romans and the newcomers.