

report: March 2008

“A normal country with normal problems”

Igor Stromajer is a multi-media artist who describes himself as an "intimate mobile communicator". He was born in Maribor in 1967 and his emotionally and politically charged work has been shown in recent years in 50 countries on all continents. Stromajer is also active in Internet, where he operates the art platform www.intima.org.

What does the fact that my country at present holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union mean for us? Nothing, I assume. People live and enjoy their lives in the same way as ever. It is not my country that is now leading the EU but its politicians and professional bureaucrats. This is simply their job for the next six months and not a privilege.

It is difficult to say where we find ourselves in Europe, as we are Europe. Slovenia is a Central European country. We are a normal country with normal problems and successes, just like every other normal country. Our capital Ljubljana lies considerable to the west of Vienna and far north of Rome. We do not think differently about Europe to other European states. Europe is a fact, not a decision that one makes.

I would describe the general mood among Slovenes as good. But I don't see any typical "Slovene feeling for life". Our country is simply too small for something like this, we have been and still are exposed to many influences: the Italian-Mediterranean, the Balkan, the German. If one were to look for something that characterises people here, then I would say: a wonderful fusion of these influences,

Officially – as an independent, officially recognised nation – we are only 18 years old. But nevertheless we are not a young country. Our language and culture developed from the 7th century onwards. This is also why the Slovenes have a strong national consciousness. Only because they are so conscious of their culture, have Slovenes been able to preserve their identity over the centuries.

After the collapse of Yugoslavia Slovenia grew rapidly. Happily, this development was intelligently directed, so that no shock was caused. This is also due to the fact that Slovenia was never part of the East Bloc. The borders to Western Europe were always open and even during the Yugoslav period the economy was relatively healthy. We had good preconditions for our start as an independent nation.

And as far as art is concerned: for a long time now it has had nothing more to do with nations, it is globalised in every sense. And I don't believe that art today has any kind of significance. People could live without it. And in fact that is what most of them already do. The art world is a closed system that masturbates about its own ideas and has no influence on normal life and peoples' problems. Why should this be any different in Slovenia to elsewhere?