

Distinguished excellencies, distinguished Mrs Damjana Pečnik, director of the Directorate for cultural heritage of Ministry for education, science, culture and sport of Slovenia, dear colleagues from partner institutions, dear guests, colleagues from SEM!

Welcome to the Slovene ethnographic museum, where we have entered the spring with the European winter fertility masquerades. They have already brought us the fruits in the shape of the exhibition Carnival King of Europe that has travelled from Italian San Michele all'Adige through Basque Bilbao to Slovene Ljubljana and it will continue its way to Romania and Poland. We have added to the presentation of most popular carnival heritage groups from Slovenia under the title the Carnival heritage of Slovenia.

The first part of the project Carnival King of Europe which is cofinanced by European Union has started in the year 2007 and it was initiated by Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina from San Michele all'Adige in Italy. Eight ethnographic museums from eight states have taken part in the second part of the project. Its aim is comparative research of winter fertility masquerades in the European context. Colleagues from partner museums went to make fieldwork to study these contents, to document and to compare them. They have collected objects for museum collections and created rich photo and video documentation. One of the results is the travelling exhibition we are opening in Ljubljana tonight.

The project brings many positive results: it has connected ethnographic museums within a common research project and rich video documentation was created. It will be presented and discussed tomorrow on the round table and at the film projection under the title Visual research of Carnivals.

From the point of view of our museum I can say that we've obtained new experiences, knowledge, photo and video documentation. The objects displayed as carnival heritage of Slovenia are or are intended to be a part of national register of the intangible heritage, coordinated by our museum. On behalf of being part of this project the museum with the complex museological activities focused on the topics of carnivals is continuing the series of achievements done by prominent Slovene researchers Niko Kuret, Aleš Gačnik, Janez Bogataj and Jurij Fikfak.

So after all I can say: long live the Carnival King of Europe!

I owe my thanks to colleagues from partner museums for inspiring common work, my colleagues Nena Židov and Adela Ramovš, curators of this exhibition, and Nadja Valentinčič Furlan for AV research and organisation of tomorrow's conference, staff of the museum and the company Žito for *krofi*, popular culinary carnival element in Slovenia.

Dr. Bojana Rogelj Škafar, director

Slovene ethnographic museum