

The Crypt (Minoriti)

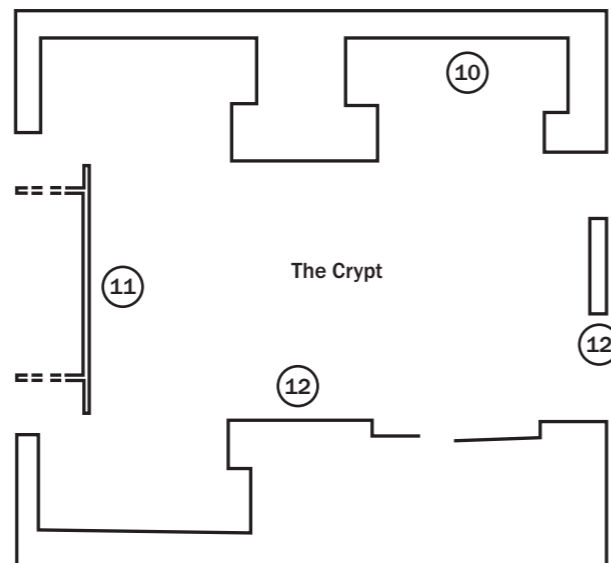
Darko Aleksovski combines a moment of extreme intimacy, typewritten love letters, and a dream-like palm tree scenery. These unaddressed and never sent letters – but directed at specific people – in the embrace of eternal summer, speak of a longing for a tropical Garden of Eden where the Fruit of Love can, unburdened by societal restraints, perhaps ripen once again on the (palm) Tree of Knowledge.

In **Vadim Fiškin's** installation a palm tree appears out of the shadow of a paint bucket. *miss Christmas* opens up a phantasmic world of longing and projections. Who hasn't ever dreamt of escaping the pagantry of Christmas, spending December underneath a tropical palm tree? Instead, Europeans brought Christmas trees into the world and we all keep projecting for what we can't have. Not to mention poor Poinsettias, themselves tropical plants, who had the bad fortune of reminding us of Christmas, only to be thrown out every January 1st.

The crypt, as a profaned sacred space, takes us into the world of longing. **Edith Payer** stages various saints of the Catholic world of faith as artificial palm trees. In hagiography, the palm symbolizes martyrs. Here we see Saint Roch with a little dog, Mary Magdalene and the Pietá. Mary weeping for her dead son Jesus Christ. As petroleum products, they stand for a longevity that is more similar to the saints than to us humans. Perhaps anthropomorphizing plants leads us to more empathy for our natural environment?

- 10 Darko Aleksovski.** *Never Not in Love*, 2025. Site-specific installation adapted from a previous work created in 2023: *Waves*, 2025. 11 digital prints on blueback mounted on plywood panels
Love Letters to Loneliness, 2023. 7 typewritten texts on Fabriano 80 GSM coloured paper

- 11 Vadim Fiškin.** *miss Christmas*, 2012. Projection, bucket
12 Edith Payer. *Holy Plants*, 2025. Sculptural installations with fake plants in mixed media:
Pietá, 2024/2025
Mary Magdalene, 2025
Saint Roch, 2025



exhibition venues:

UGM Kabinet (Maribor Art Gallery),
Strossmayerjeva ulica 6, Maribor

The Judgment Tower + The Crypt (Minoriti),
Pristan 8, Maribor

opening hours:
Tue-Sun, 10:00-18:00

www.ugm.si
www.minoriti.si

Tired Palm Trees is a transnational exhibition project that changes at each exhibition venue and is anchored anew locally. Versions of it have already been organized at Pavelhaus – Pavlova hiša in Laafeld (2019), Le Cube - independent art room in Rabat (2022) and Art Sonje Center in Seoul (2024). In 2026 it will travel to Museo MARTE, San Salvador. With support and contributions by many artists and curator-colleagues David Kranzelbinder, Elisabeth Piskernik, Heehyun Cho and Jure Kirbiš.

This edition of Tired Palm Trees is produced by Maribor Art Gallery and is curated by Markus Waitschacher and Jure Kirbiš. Minoriti and Maribor Puppet Theatre are partners in the project

UGM

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08. 03. – 10. 04. 2025



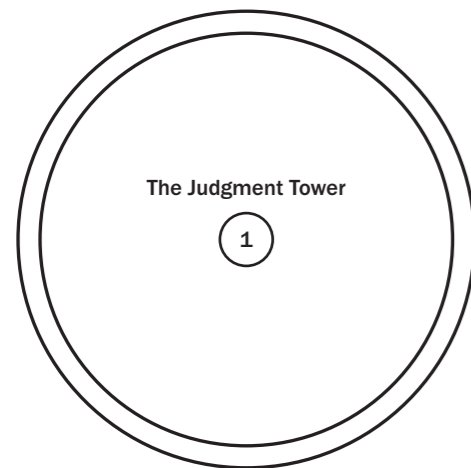
Tired Palm Trees

This exhibition is not an exhibition *about* palm trees. It borrows the palm tree as a symbolic image. A symbol with manifold meanings. Plants at large, not just palm trees, have always held a highly symbolic and therefore political character. They must embellish, trivialise, cover up or greenwash. In the exhibition, they have become tired. Tired of the burden of all the projections they have had to absorb, of the actual torments they have been exposed to or of the unending misinterpretations and misuses of their habitat. Tired palm trees are symptomatic of the fatigue in a society that cannot find rest despite sleep. Palm trees offer themselves as surfaces for projections with multiple interpretations – somewhere between the luxuriant distance, the dreamed vacation feelings or the sad tropics, the *tristes tropiques* (Lévi-Strauss). Due to the increasing warming

of the planet, palm trees and their friends will soon be able to live anywhere and everywhere. However, changes in the Earth's climate pose a massive threat to their natural habitats. Even hardy plants such as palm trees can no longer withstand storms, floods, heat waves or frost. The increasing number of natural disasters and associated dangers forebode their future and the future of mankind. At the same time, palm trees are souvenirs and witnesses to colonial practices, that for centuries arbitrarily shipped across the world, categorised in what they believed to be the scientific classification, and exploited to death not only humans, but also their botanical fellows. Further, the symbol of the palm tree contains so much hope, longing, wishful thinking and wistful desire. Despite all the political adversity, we dream of a better world...

The Judgment Tower (Minoriti)

The Riverport Tower, commonly known as the Judgment Tower, as a place of arriving and leaving the city (as persons and as goods), recalls longings for a faraway place. **Victor Cruz & Hugo Portillo** bring a memory of their native El Salvador to Maribor. Their tropical sculptures are not real palm trees, but rather attempts at reconstructing the past. They are the *possibility* of the *impossibility*: using simple materials, found branches and banana leaves, they attempt to improve memories of the global South. In their deconstruction of the palm tree, a symbol of longing for Western tourists, Cruz & Portillo use it merely as a backdrop and a prop to create certain moods and evoke yearning. What socio-political ideas do these palm trees convey to us? The palm tree functions here as a symbol of touristic (and other) exploitations of the world, but also as an identification factor. It is shipped, replanted, used, changed, but also longingly cared for. But who can afford to take care of nature?



- 1 **Victor Cruz & Hugo Portillo.** *Tropical Sculptures: The Possibility of Impossibility*, 2025. Installation, wood, banana leaves

UGM Kabinet (UGM | Maribor Art Gallery)

Marko Breclj, pioneer of Slovenian performance art, poet and activist, created *Palmodar* (portmanteau of palm and calendar, meaning “the gift of palm”) in 2015, an ironic calendar portraying palm trees along the seaside promenade and in the centre of Koper on the Slovenian Adriatic coast. The palm trees were brought from North Africa not long before they froze to death over two windy weeks of a particularly harsh winter. The bodies of 186 “tireless tourist workers” were buried in a common burial ground and no funeral service was held. The calendar serves to undermine the reputation of the Imperial Mandate Bearer, the Pilot of Democracy (founder of the Avion Party), the Democratic Despot, the Skyscraping Flaunter and the Palmbringer of the Butale of Istria under Slovenian Rule (various nicknames of the then mayor). In a broader sense, it is a testimony to human callousness towards their plant cohabitants.

The performer **Mateja Bučar** presents a documentation of her, since 2012 often performed *I Would Have Been a Palm Tree*, in which the performer herself becomes a palm tree and moves with the wind,

simultaneously serving as a projection surface to present collective images and stories about palm trees. In this manner, Bučar’s performance touches on various projections of the changing world and us in it, somewhere between thoughts and dreams of technology, ecology, social, but also very personal paths and truths.

Metka Krašovec’s artwork *Rising Waters* is part of a series of surreal-looking lithographs created over several years. The work shown here is part of the UGM Collection and, as in many other sheets, probably shows a couple embracing in lush nature. Here the palm trees are blowing in the wind, bending in different directions. Is it the storm of love? Or bad weather?

Tadej Pogačar’s twenty-part photo series portrays palm trees on Tenerife, which had long been regarded by Europe as a springboard for the conquest of new continents. In a climate similar to the African continent, the conquerors of the world were able to carry out protected experiments with plants and animals. Most of the palm trees there were imported and mixed with the indigenous varieties. The magnificent flora that tourists marvel at on Tenerife today was artificially bred and shows a side effect of the brutal European colonial past.

Christina Helena Romirer’s palm tree oscillates between design and desire. Her *tropical explosion* refers to the containment of so-called *tropical* plants in homes. They are so overbred that they are almost no longer alive. The artist uses recycled and ironed plastic bags and other types of plastic, a carrier of meaning through which we bring the faraway home.

In **Katrin Ströbel**’s installation *Île de Gorée*, we see a palm-fringed (urban) landscape of the island of Gorée, the island off the coast of Senegal from whence so many people were sent as slaves from the African continent to the Americas. Katrin Ströbel blows an artificial wind on the palm trees: The sadness of the history they have lived through is inscribed in them. At the same time, they have to sway in the wind and still serve and maintain the image of an exotic and romantic faraway place.

In **Roswitha Weingrill**’s fabric installation we see parts of palm trees spread out in the gallery space. Wind-distorted palm trees, whose bending and waving is supposed to visually indicate the wind’s strength, are a classic image in reports about hurricanes. The most common palm species in Florida, *Dictyosperma album*, for example, is also called the *hurricane palm*. The reason for this is its ability to drop its leaves in strong winds to avoid serious damage to the trunk.

- 2 **Marko Breclj.** *Palmodar*, 2015 (calendars for 2016 and 2017). Photographs: Damir De Simone, Matevž Pucer, Marko Breclj; graphic design: Borut Wenzel; coil bound calendar, 13 pages (each), digital print
- 3 **Mateja Bučar.** *I Would Have Been a Palm Tree*, 2012/2023. Idea, choreography: Mateja Bučar; dance: Kristina Aleksova, Mateja Bučar; vizual concept: Vadim Fiškin; sound and music: Borut Savski, Errorist; text: Renata Salecl; software: Miha Grčar, video excerpt from performance: Mateja Bučar, 2025
- 4 **Metka Krašovec.** *Rising Waters*, 1975. Lithograph and silk-screen on paper, UGM Collection

- 5 **Tadej Pogačar.** *Twenty Palm Trees of Santa Cruz de Tenerife*, 2009. Installation, 20 colour photographs, edition: 1/3 + 1 author copy
- 6 **Christina Helena Romirer.** *Tropical explosion (palm tree)*, 2020. Copper, concrete, plastic, cable, adhesive tape
- 7 **Katrin Ströbel.** *Île de Gorée*, 2011. Digital print (drawing), 2 fans
Géographie de la peine capitale, 2016. Collage and drawing
- 8 **Roswitha Weingrill.** *How to Fold a Palm Tree*, 2025. Fabrics

The Pool (UGM | Maribor Art Gallery)

In the education space – the so-called Swimming Pool – our gaze wanders away from planet Earth into the surrounding universe. **Edith Payer** has designed various planets and celestial bodies that visitors can populate with palm trees. Earth’s history shows a close connection between colonialism and plants. What will this look like in the future when humans colonize different planets? Will we bring something beautiful along with all our ugly qualities?

- 9 **Edith Payer.** *Palmiverse*, 2025. Participatory drawing

