Mini Castra 2026

6. mednarodni festival akvarela

6th International Watercolour Festival


INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOR SOCIETY
IWS SLOVENIA


Lokarjeva
galerija

Mini Castra 2026

6. mednarodni festival akvarela malega formata

6th International Small Format Watercolour Festival

26. 9. – 30. 10. 2026

Lokarjeva galerija
Ajdovščina, Slovenia

Mini Castra 2026

Na letošnji 6. mednarodni festival akvarela malega formata Mini Castra 2026 je v prvem krogu svoje akvarele poslalo 182 avtorjev iz 27 držav. Mednarodna žirija je na razstavo sprejela 150 avtorjev iz 25 držav.
Prispela dela so raznovrstna, izrazno se precej razlikujejo med seboj in se vsebinsko lotevajo različnih tematik. Sprejeta dela so večinoma visoke oziroma ustrezne likovne kvalitete, tako da je imela komisija pri ocenjevanju precej težko delo. Strokovna komisija je pri svojem delu upoštevala splošne kriterije kakovosti, ki veljajo za likovno umetnost oziroma specifično za akvarel. Pri izboru komisija ni imela drugih omejitev. V obravnavo so bile zajete vse tehnike, motivi in koncepti akvarela, upoštevana je bila izvirnost ideje ter pristop k reševanju likovnih problemov. Skozi to prizmo je komisija sprejela odločitev in izbrala dela, ki izstopajo, ter podelila nagrade oziroma diplome.

Strokovna komisija
Komisijo, kateri je predsedovala Sonja Švec Španjol, umetnostna zgodovinarka in muzeologinja iz Hrvaške, so sestavljali Vladimir Bačič, vodja Lokarjeve galerije, predstavnik IWS Slovenije in podpredsednik Zveze društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov, Lucijan Bratuš, upokojeni prof. na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje, Klavdija Jeršinovec, slikarka, akvarelistka in kostumografinja in Azad Karim, akademski slikar.

Nagrado Občine Ajdovščina je prejela Tere Lojero iz Mehike. Sponzorske nagrade so prejeli Olha Herhel iz Poljske, Marina Kravchenko iz Francije in Žarko Vrezec iz Slovenije.
Diplome so prejeli Momčilo Dabanović iz Srbije, Lidiya Epshteyn iz Nemčije, Claudio Javier Feldman iz Belgije, Valter Maggi iz Italije, Sonia Perez iz Španije, Iva Štefanac iz Hrvaške, Simonetta Tolot iz Italije, Ana Undurraga iz Španije, Špela Vodopivec iz Slovenije in Javier Zorrilla iz Španije.

Vladimir Bačič

Mini Castra 2026

For this year's exhibition at the 6th International Small Format Watercolour Festival, Mini Castra 2026, 182 artists from 27 countries submitted their watercolours in the first round. The international professional committee selected 150 artists from 25 countries to participate in the exhibition.
The works received are diverse, differing markedly in expression and exploring a wide range of themes. Most of the selected works are of a high or appropriately accomplished artistic standard, making the committee's evaluation process particularly demanding. In carrying out its work, the professional committee considered the general criteria of quality applicable to fine art, with particular attention to the art of watercolour. The committee was not bound by any other restrictions in making its selection. All watercolour techniques, motifs and concepts were considered, together with the originality of each idea and the artist's approach to resolving visual and painterly challenges. On this basis, the committee reached its decision, selected the works that stood out from the rest, and awarded prizes and honourable mention awards.

Professional Committee
The professional committee was chaired by Sonja Švec Španjol, an art historian and museologist from Croatia. Its members were Vladimir Bačič, director of the Lokar Gallery, representative of IWS Slovenia and vice-president of the Association of Slovenian Fine Artists' Societies; Lucijan Bratuš, retired professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design; Klavdija Jeršinovec, painter, watercolourist and costume designer; and Azad Karim, academic painter.

The Municipality of Ajdovščina Award was presented to Tere Lojero from Mexico. Sponsor awards were presented to Olha Herhel from Poland, Marina Kravchenko from France and Žarko Vrezec from Slovenia.
Honourable mention certificates were presented to Momčilo Dabanović from Serbia, Lidiya Epshteyn from Germany, Claudio Javier Feldman from Belgium, Valter Maggi from Italy, Sonia Perez from Spain, Iva Štefanac from Croatia, Simonetta Tolot from Italy, Ana Undurraga from Spain, Špela Vodopivec from Slovenia and Javier Zorrilla from Spain.

Vladimir Bačič

Mini Castra 2026

Čeprav bi mnogi danes morda rekli, da tehnika akvarela v kontekstu sodobnih umetniških tokov ni posebej priljubljena, dela, predstavljena na mednarodnem umetniškem dogodku in razstavi »Mini Castra 2026«, dokazujejo, kako sodobna je lahko ta tradicionalna tehnika.

Ta samosvoj medij – ki hkrati zahteva obvladovanje tehničnih načel in ponuja izjemno svobodo za raziskovanje ter eksperimentiranje – posameznika pogosto spodbuja k odkrivanju novih možnosti na področju naključja. To se uresničuje z iskanjem idealnega ravnovesja med teksturo papirja, prosojnostjo in gostoto pigmenta pri upodabljanju želenega motiva, čustva ali misli. V vizualni umetnosti je ustvarjalni proces ključnega pomena; pri akvarelnem slikarstvu ta proces zajema negotovost, učenje, odkrivanje in uresničevanje, medtem ko novo delo dobiva svojo podobo. Matko Peić je poudaril, da nobena druga tehnika ne omogoča čopiču, da bi tako oživil barve kot akvarel, ter izpostavil, kako ta svež, tekoč in čist medij doseže svoj vrhunec, ko se umetniki odločijo slikati vodo z vodo in tako dosežejo čudovito, kristalno jasnost. Akvarel, ki ga pogosto označujejo za najplemenitejšo slikarsko tehniko, zahteva posebno občutljivost, potrpežljivost in zbranost. Napak je praktično nemogoče popraviti, vsaka odvečna poteza pa zmanjša intenzivnost izraza.

Posledično lahko ustvarjalni proces pri akvarelu razumemo kot igro, meditacijo in izziv, pa tudi kot poskus preseganja lastnih meja – soočanje z lastnim notranjim svetom ob hkratnem odkrivanju novega. Omejen manevrski prostor nikakor ne zmanjšuje virtuoznosti izraza ali barvnega bogastva, ki ga ponuja ta medij na vodni osnovi. Ključno vlogo ima tudi sama slikarska podlaga; kakovost papirja v veliki meri določa izrazne možnosti med slikanjem, saj belina in tekstura papirja aktivno sodelujeta v igri naključja, ko se voda razliva. V tem smislu papir sam predstavlja eno od barv in s svojo belino prevzema vlogo povezovalca ter združevalca vizualnih elementov.

Mednarodni umetniški dogodek »Mini Castra« potrjuje, da ta tehnika na vodni osnovi še naprej privablja umetnike, ki prepoznavajo kakovost in ustvarjalni potencial akvarela. Med njimi so tudi tisti, ki jih želja po sodelovanju na razstavi spodbudi, da zapustijo območje udobja svojih prepoznavnih slogov in

uveljavljenih tehnik ter se podajo v svet akvarela – pri tem pa pogosto presenetijo gledalce z izvirnostjo in pristnim občutkom za medij, ki deluje lahkotno, a je v resnici zahteven. Od vsega začetka pa do danes zanimanje umetnikov vseh generacij za ta ugledni dogodek, ki ponuja vpogled v najnovejša akvarelna dela sodobnih umetnikov z vsega sveta, ostaja nespremenjeno.

Pregled letošnjih del, prijavljenih na razstavo »Mini Castra 2026«, razkriva prevlado figurativnih upodobitev s poudarkom na krajinah, mestnih vedutah, portretih, tihožitjih in živalskih motivih, medtem ko abstraktna dela slavijo barvno bogastvo in svobodo pri oblikovanju akvarelnih nanosov. Intimen format gledalca vabi, da stopi bližje, se osredotoči in si vzame čas za odkrivanje nians, vtkanih v posamezno delo; umetniški izrazi segajo od prefinjenega minimalizma in lirične poetičnosti do izrazito ekspresivnih, barvno usmerjenih interpretacij.

Akvarel – pogosto opisan kot »tehnika barvne svetlobe« – se tako izkazuje za prepričljivo izbiro pri upodabljanju umetniške zamisli ali bežnega trenutka; to lastnost prepoznavajo številni umetniki, ki sodelujejo na letošnji razstavi »Mini Castra 2026«. Tiha, nevsiljiva moč tega medija na vodni osnovi mu je omogočila prilagajanje spreminjajočim se časom in ohranjanje sodobnega značaja, hkrati pa je ostal zvest svojim temeljnim načelom in ohranil močno vez s tradicijo.

Sonja Švec Španjol, višja kustosinja, mag. umetnostne zgodovine

Mini Castra 2026

Although many today might argue that watercolour is not a particularly prominent technique within contemporary artistic currents, the works presented at the international art event and exhibition Mini Castra 2026 demonstrate just how contemporary this traditional medium can be.

This distinctive medium – one that simultaneously demands mastery of technical principles and offers exceptional freedom for exploration and experimentation – often encourages artists to discover new possibilities within the realm of chance. This is achieved through the search for an ideal balance between the texture of the paper, the transparency and density of the pigment, and the rendering of the desired motif, emotion or thought. In visual art, the creative process is of crucial importance; in watercolour painting, this process encompasses uncertainty, learning, discovery and realisation, as the work gradually assumes its form. Matko Peić emphasised that no other technique enables the brush to bring colour to life in quite the same way as watercolour, highlighting how this fresh, fluid and pure medium reaches its fullest expression when artists choose to paint water with water, thereby attaining a remarkable crystalline clarity. Watercolour, often described as the noblest of painting techniques, requires particular sensitivity, patience and concentration. Mistakes are virtually impossible to correct, while every superfluous brushstroke diminishes the intensity of expression.

Consequently, the creative process in watercolour may be understood as play, meditation and challenge, as well as an attempt to transcend one's own limits – a confrontation with one's inner world while simultaneously discovering something new. The limited scope for intervention in no way diminishes the virtuosity of expression or the richness of colour offered by this water-based medium. The painting support itself also plays a key role; the quality of the paper largely determines the expressive possibilities during the act of painting, since the whiteness and texture of the paper actively participate in the play of chance as the water spreads. In this sense, the paper itself becomes one of the colours and, through its whiteness, assumes the role of connector and unifier of the visual elements.

The international art event Mini Castra confirms that this water-based technique continues to attract artists who recognise the quality and creative potential of watercolour. Among them are also those whose wish to participate in the exhibition encourages them to leave the comfort zone of their recognisable styles and established techniques and to enter the world of watercolour – often surprising viewers with their originality and genuine sensitivity to a medium that appears light and effortless, yet is in reality highly demanding. From its beginnings to the present day, the interest shown by artists of all generations in this distinguished event, which offers an insight into the latest watercolour works by contemporary artists from across the world, has remained undiminished.

A survey of this year's works submitted for the Mini Castra 2026 exhibition reveals a predominance of figurative representations, with an emphasis on landscapes, urban views, portraits, still lifes and animal motifs, while the abstract works celebrate chromatic richness and freedom in the shaping of watercolour washes. The intimate format invites the viewer to step closer, to focus, and to take the time to discover the nuances woven into each individual work; the artistic expressions range from refined minimalism and lyrical poetics to markedly expressive, colour-oriented interpretations.

Watercolour – often described as the "technique of coloured light" – thus proves to be a compelling choice for the depiction of an artistic idea or a fleeting moment, a quality recognised by many of the artists participating in this year's Mini Castra 2026 exhibition. The quiet, unobtrusive power of this water-based medium has enabled it to adapt to changing times and to preserve its contemporary character, while at the same time remaining faithful to its fundamental principles and maintaining a strong bond with tradition.

Sonja Švec Španjol, Senior Curator, MA in Art History

Nagrade / Awards

Nagrada Občine Ajdovščina / Municipality of Ajdovščina Award

Tere Lojero, Mexico

Nagrade sponzorjev / Sponzor Awards

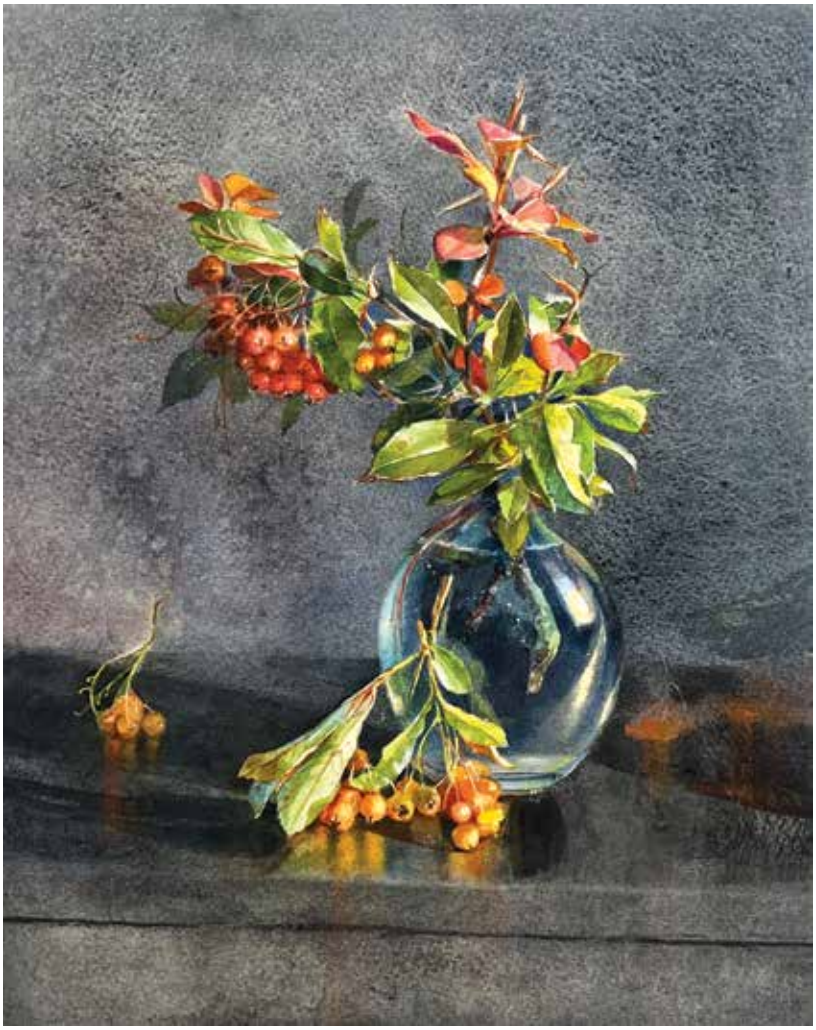
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Olha Herhel, Poland

Žarko Vrezec, Slovenia



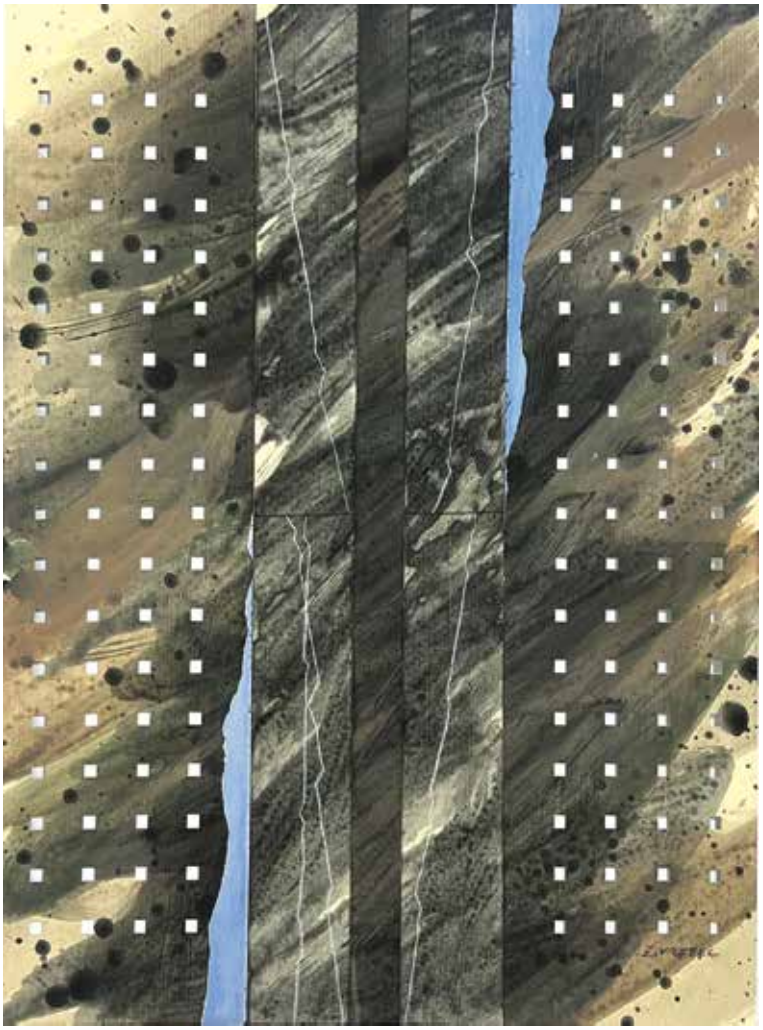
Tere Lojero, Mexico,
Urbino, 2026, 32 × 24 cm



Marina Kravchenko, France,
Barberry sprigs, 2025, 37 × 30 cm



Olha Herhel, Poland,
Watermelon, 2026, 40 × 29,7 cm



Žarko Vrezec, Slovenia,
Iz zbirke »Dokumenti 1«, 2025, 40 × 29,7 cm

Diplome / Honourable Mention Certificates

Momčilo Dabanović, Serbia

Lidiya Epshteyn, Germany

Claudio Javier Feldman, Belgium

Valter Maggi, Italy

Sonia Perez, Spain

Iva Štefanac, Croatia

Simonetta Tolot, Italy

Ana Undurraga, Spain

Špela Vodopivec, Slovenia

Javier Zorrilla, Spain



Momčilo Dabanović, Serbia,
On the Terrace, 2026, 35 × 27 cm



Lidiya Epshteyn, Germany,
Autumn, 2025, 29,7 × 42 cm



Claudio Javier Feldman, Belgium,
Cupula Buenos Aires, 2025, 29 × 8,5 cm



Valter Maggi, Italy,
Sunset on the gulf, 2024, 28 × 38 cm



Sonia Perez, Spain,
Autumn by the river, 2025, 29,7 × 42 cm



Iva Štefanac, Croatia,
Titraji Mediterana 59, 2026, 29 × 41 cm



Simonetta Tolot, Italy,
Passeggiando, 2025, 28 × 38 cm



Ana Undurraga, Spain,
Vereda 2, 2026, 27 × 38 cm



Špela Vodopivec, Slovenia,
Vse glasneje, 2026, 30 × 20 cm



Javier Zorrilla, Spain,
Nevada al anochecer, 2025, 40 × 30 cm

Razstavljalci / Exhibitors

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Alejo Bassetti, Italy
Jani Bavčer, Slovenia
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MINISTRSTVO ZA KULTURO

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The Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies

Društvo likovnih umetnikov
Severne Primorske

Mini Castra 2026

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