

Willows Enwoven Round Willows

The weaving craft, which used to be highly developed in the Mirna River valley and on its margins in the past centuries, today exists only in the memory of time past and in the work of few individuals who make woven artifacts of strands, canes, and straw of willows and other tree species. Since the primary material were, of course, a-year-old willow or osier canes, the willow was an invaluable tree on the edges of meadows and fields, along streams, and in the wetlands. Weaving skills were passed on through generations, although in the years before and after the First World War some people even attended weaving schools. They raised the level of weaving knowledge and contributed to a wider variety of useful artifacts.

Damjan Popelar has enwoven willow trees in the Mirna River valley to pay homage to the craft and, to my understanding, mainly for them to serve as a reminder. He used the basic weaving technique of intertwining and interlacing willow canes. Although it is today modern and popular at each such (artistic) act to talk about installations, I could very hardly label his address with this technicistic word. The Enwoven Willows, which arouse attention even of an inattentive traveller across the Mirna River valley, mean much more than that. They signify the unity, the symbiosis of "culture" and "nature". Out of the reminder of this former symbiosis grew ironical landscape sculptures, suggesting that there is something more to this landscape, these settlements...Something similar to them, creative. Yet, the harder you look, search in the yards, houses, and workshops, the more you realize that the only thing that is left there to "greet" you is plastic and the "Best Neighbour" and Interspar bags! Who knows, in a few years Popelar might be forced to dress the willows of the Mirna River valley in these bags. Possibly, but this story will be robbed of its logic!

Prof. Janez Bogataj, Ph.D., January 2007