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Graphic novel wins book of year award

Ljubljana, 1 December - An idiosyncratic graphic novel that was originally released in instalments on Facebook has won the Grand Prix for book of the year at the Slovenian Book Fair.

"Vinjete Straholjubca" (The Bête Noire Vignettes) is a joint project by writer Eva Mahkovic and illustrator Eva Mlinar, and the first original Slovenian release by VigeVageKnjige, a publisher specialised in translations of comics and graphic novels.

Originally a series of short snippets posted on Facebook between 2011 and 2015, the project morphed into a loosely connected collage of horror stories that the publisher describes as "an attempt to create a literary and visual collection of the grotesque of an elusive genre".

The Book Fair jury, comprising literature lovers as well as industry professionals, described it as an "intimate and provocative manifestation of a tangle of lucid ideas by two authors".

The authors have created a rich fantastic world of their own, but they also draw profusely on sources including the Bible, William Shakespeare, Truman Capote and Umberto Eco.

The book is "controlled down to the last detail, enhancing the reader's experience of encountering the emerging genre of the graphic novel," according to jury member Domen Fras, a graphic designer.

The award is not confined to any one genre, all books published between 1 October 2018 and 30 September 2019 were eligible. The works were judged as integral pieces of art, with the jury considering not just the stories but also layout, language, graphic design, illustration and photography.

The winner was selected by Slovenian Book Fair visitors from among a shortlist of five very diverse works which included a literarised tour guide of Istria, a poetry collection, and a collection of Facebook posts by Mahkovic, the only author with two shortlisted works.

Jury member Nina Kožar said the selection was accidentally heavy on books that were created on modern platforms: three started out on Facebook and one seems like it did.

The award was conferred on the last day of the 35th Slovenian Book Fair on Sunday.