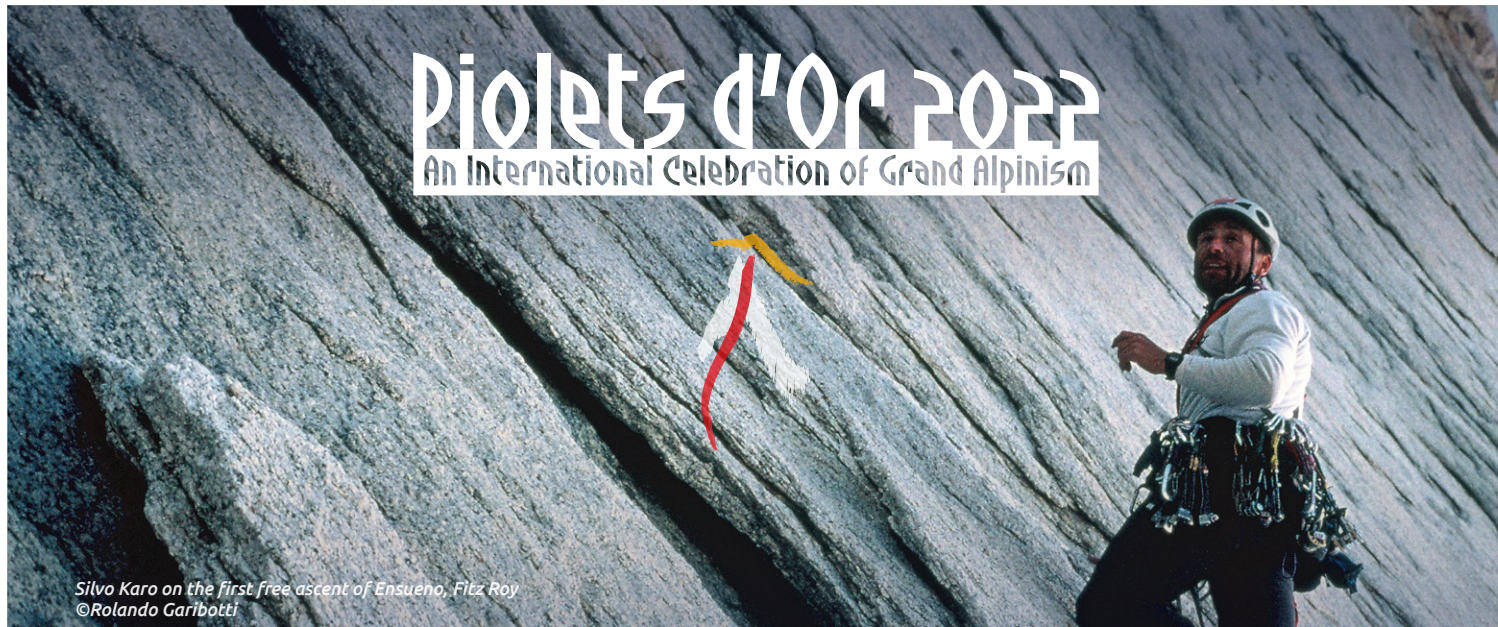


Piolets d'Or 2022

An International Celebration of Grand Alpinism



Silvo Karo on the first free ascent of Ensueño, Fitz Roy
©Rolando Garibotti

Press release #2 - October 2022

It is with enormous pleasure we can announce that during the 2022 edition of the Piolets d'Or, the 14th Walter Bonatti - Piolets d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to Slovenian alpinist Silvo Karo.

In the 1980s Slovenian alpinists began to take the world by storm. Later, they would become well-known for their largely bold and fast ascents, made mostly in impeccable style over technically difficult ground, the players confident in their superior ability and reserves to travel lightweight and keep out of trouble.

All benefited from a fantastic training ground – the Julian Alps. Due to the diminutive size of the country (a largely autonomous state even before the break-up of Yugoslavia), the mountains are on almost everyone's doorstep. They present a complex arena of limestone peaks, with huge walls not necessarily of best quality rock. Winter conditions were harsh, giving ample scope for proficiency on rock, ice, and mixed.

Silvo Karo grew up on a farm above the rural village of Brdo, northeast of Ljubljana, and began climbing when 17. He quickly bonded with Janez Jeglič and the older, more experienced Franček Knez, the trio going on to climb many new routes together, both at home and abroad. They became affectionately known as The Three Musketeers. Over two days in the summer of 1983, during their training for a first visit to Patagonia, the three put up 19 new routes in two days, largely climbing unroped, some of them in descent.

The highlights of Silvo's career are perhaps the first ascents of the south face of Cerro Torre and the west face of Bhagirathi III, the latter widely acknowledged at the time to be the hardest technical ascent in the Indian Himalaya. These were both climbed with Janez Jeglič during their 10-year partnership, though Karo considers Psycho Vertical (Jeglič-Karo-Knez) on Torre Egger to be the best new route he climbed in Patagonia.

Rolando Garibotti writes: *"when I met Silvo he was in his prime – 70kg of motivation and decisiveness, little talk and all action. Over the ensuing years we managed to share a rope on a good number of occasions, in Yosemite, Patagonia, and elsewhere. Climbing with him felt like cheating. Condensed in one man were all the skills one could possibly need in the mountains, from a rope-gun to lead the hardest pitch, to an army of porters for heavy loads, to an entire rescue team if something was to happen. He had the energy of a train, and there was something distinctly reassuring about the way he pounded pitons: the rock would ask for forgiveness. No matter the conditions, when faced with an objective he cared about, his determination was unwavering. Here was an honest, no-nonsense man, for whom I have always had enormous respect. Some of his climbs are the stuff of legend and have inspired climbers the world over. He has left an indelible mark on the sport".*



Silvo Karo in the
Julian Alps, 1978
©Silvo Karo Collection

Silvo has climbed over 2000 routes and made more than 300 first ascents. A selection of his most significant contributions outside Slovenia include:

1983

Fitz Roy, east face, new route, Devil's Dihedral (6a A2 90°)

Aguja Val Bois, east face, new route. D.E. (5 100°)

1985

Yalung Kang, north face, new route, reached 8,100m

Grandes Jorasses, north face, third ascent of Rolling Stones (6b A3 80°)

1986

Cerro Torre, east face, new route, Hell's Direct (7a A4 M6 95°)

Broad Peak, normal route

Torre Egger, southeast face, new route, Psycho Vertical (6c A3 90°)

El Mocho, north face, new route, Grey Yellow Arrow (7a A0)

1987

Lhotse Shar, southeast ridge, reached 7,300m

1987-88

Cerro Torre, south face, new route (6b A4 75°)

1990

Bhagirathi III, west face, new route (6b A4 85°)

Everest, west ridge to 7,500m

1993

El Capitan, Wyoming Sheep Ranch (5.10 A5)

1996

Nalumasortog, new route, Mussel Power (7a A3)

El Capitan, Salathé Wall in 10h 25min

Half Dome, Direct Northwest Face, 11h 20mins (speed record at that time)

1997

El Capitan, West Face (5.11c) in eight hours car to car

1999

Fitz Roy, west face, Ensueno, second overall and first free ascent (6b+ obl 45°)

Fitz Roy, Slovak Route, alpine style with new variation from Glacier Torre (6c 40°)

2000

La Esfinge, new route, Cruz del Sur (7b)

2002

Grand Pilier d'Angle, Divine Providence to Mont Blanc summit

2003

Cerro Murallon, first ascent of main summit

2005

Cerro Torre, southeast ridge, new route, Slovenian Sit Start (in a single push of 28 hours; 7a A2 70°)

Aguja Poincenot, Sperone degli Italiani, second ascent (and first of this route to the summit, 6c A3).

2006

Trango Tower, Eternal Flame, first one-day ascent (7a A2 M5)

2009

Tofana de Rozes, south face, Goodbye 1999 (7b on sight, repeat)

Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, Punta Brendal southeast face, Nero su Bianco (7b on sight, repeat)

Meru Central, attempt on the then unclimbed Shark's Fin in alpine style.

During all this time he made many new routes, first free ascents, and speed climbs in his native Julian and Kamnik Alps, including mountain routes such as Zaumak Nerva (7c) that were the most difficult in the country at the time. At his peak he was red-pointing 8a.

In 2007 he founded the Mountain Film Festival in Slovenia, which aims to increase the production of Slovenian mountain films and popularize mountain culture.

In 2010 the then President of Slovenia, Danilo Turk, conferred one of the highest state honours, the Order of Merit, on Karo and Knez for 'their achievements in Slovenian mountain climbing and for their contribution to the reputation of Slovenian mountaineering, and the greater recognition of Slovenia, throughout the world'.



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