

St. Gallen Museum of Natural History Park

The setting: a former cow pasture over a national highway tunnel



The newly built Museum of Natural History St. Gallen was conceived of in a triage together with the adjacent Botanical Garden und Church St. Maria Neudorf. The site of the park is exemplary of the Swiss landscape paradox: in this tiny country, infrastructure, city edge conditions and bucolic landscapes are tightly interwoven. Spanned between the Museum and Church, the site is a former cow pasture built above a federal highway tunnel. Thus begins the Swiss paradox of the task: a park about natural history in suburbia, constructed upon a tunnel, surrounded by sports fields, housing and a major traffic artery.

The project brief required only incorporating two cages for recovering wounded birds, research pond and rough pasture for educational purposes. The Church asked that the park design address the two narratives of the Earth's creation: scientific vs. creationism. Just before construction, federal highway officials added severe constraints for weight and placement of vegetation and other design elements. Therefore, the first task of the project was to define an approach to understanding and expressing our contemporary relationship to nature and landscape within the context of a museum. Extensive collaboration with museum experts helped form the project.