

St. Gallen Museum of Natural History Park

Fragments of natural history serve as catalysts for our imagination



A grove of hornbeam trees flanks the park, filters out the heterogeneous context and addresses the spatial dialogue between the Church and the Museum, while allowing visitors to step out of their everyday rational world and lose themselves mentally in the dense vegetative space. Embedded within this backdrop concrete "stepping stones", 2-7m long, seduce the visitor to drift and meander through the space, discovering curious objects. The stepping stones, borrowed from traditional garden design, encourage one to walk gingerly, surrender to one's senses and discover. They are also the carriers of poetic, scientific information strewn throughout the park.

The interplay of nature and culture is expressed, for example, in the use of both "Nagelfluh", a regional sedimentary rock looking identical to hammered concrete, as well as hammered concrete itself. The concrete, a man-made material, shows both traces of human materials such as drain matt or wooden slats and a wildly natural appearance. Stone artifacts are carved of the same natural stone as the wild ground plane. That St. Gallen was once a tropical ocean is sensed in texts readings 'Bahamas', or by means of fossils. Ginkgos and larch display riddles of nature. The natural stone surface of the park originated as a cost-cutting measure. The refuse from a local stone quarry was bought cheaply and dumped over the entire surface, its bold imagery helping to carry the visitor into another perceptual realm. In addition to the hornbeams, the park's edges are planted with large ferns, perennials, hydrangea, oak and wild-plum, juxtaposing raw and gentle imagery against each other.