

KYOTO 2019 INTERCOM: "How Far Can We Come with Tradition? Shaping the Future"

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Title of the paper:

How to bring a museum up into a ski resort?

Since 1959, the Vienna Philharmonic has performed regularly in Tokyo and Osaka, but also in Hiroshima, Kawasaki, Nagano, Nagoya. The second Austrian "figurehead" is Formula 1 driver Niki Lauda who passed this year on May 20th 2019. After his success as a race car driver, he founded three airlines, first Lauda Air, later Niki, then Lauder Motion. Yet, Austria is most famous for our skiers and ski jumpers, who are always near the top at the Olympics and World Championships. Some of the Austrian ski resorts repeatedly serve as venues for World Cup races. The large ski areas in the Alps each have about 50 lifts and about 150 km of groomed ski slopes, some even up to 300 km. In addition, there are some glacier ski areas that offer year-round winter sports.

As a country predominantly formed by the Alps, Austria is ideal for alpine skiing. The ski resorts in the Austrian state of Tyrol are internationally renowned: St. Anton am Arlberg and Kitzbühel. Shortly after 1900, it was here that skiing was, in a way, "invented".

Austria has 253 ski areas. In comparison, the number of museums is astonishing: in the museum database there are currently (2019) 749 registered museums listed¹. The term "museum" is not legally protected in Austria, therefore the two leading museum associations, ICOM and MÖ (Museumsbund Österreich) set following quality standards: 1) a museum registration, 2) the Museumsgütesiegel (museum seal of quality). To date, this label has been awarded to 266 museums².

In Austria, more visits are made annually to museums (17.3 million/year) than to cinemas (15.1 million/year) or to theaters (6 million/year).³ The offer is good and varied. The small country in the heart of Europe has a high density of museums. In Austria, there are about 8.2 museums per 100,000 inhabitants.

Like almost all cultural institutions, museums depend on the support of the public sector (federal and state/city/municipality). In addition, most sponsors solicit funds from companies, e.g. the *City Archeology Museum Hall* in Tyrol primarily from construction companies who work on excavations due to new building projects and in connection with the presentation of excavation finds in the *City Archeology Museum*.

¹ <http://www.museen-in-oesterreich.at/>

² www.museumsguetesiegel.at

³ Statistik Austria 2014. – 2015: 17.3 million; 2016: 18.2 million - Wolfgang Muchitsch & Günter Kradschnig (ed.), Zur Lage der österreichischen Museen. Eine Bestandsaufnahme, Graz 2018, p. 34

Museums in Austria Example Year 2014⁴

Revenue from Admission	81,000 000 €
Shop, Events, Room Rental	71,000 000 €
Subventions	194,000 000 €
Sum	346,000 000 €
Expenditures	360,000 000 €

In the following section, I would like to compare two examples from renowned winter sports resorts:

- 1) Parish Museum in Serfaus – a museum of sacral art that reflects the history of the 700-year-old Roman Catholic parish of Serfaus.
- 2) Alpinarium in Galtür, which represents the special situation of the Tyrolean town of Galtür. It was founded, in part, as a memorial to the victims after a horrific avalanche catastrophe. The current permanent exhibition documents the unique living condition and precarious situation of a town in the Alps, but also its special allure.

The following parameters are examined: construction costs of the permanent exhibition, financing, operation, public reception, staff, etc.

Unlike the Parish Museum in Serfaus, the concept of the Alpinarium envisages changing the permanent exhibition approximately every ten years. The current presentation is entitled "Ganz Oben"/"At the Very Top". In Serfaus, they have failed to give neither the museum nor the permanent exhibition a catchy-sounding and marketable name.

Two Museums in Comparison – The Differences

⁴ Museumsbund Österreich, Museumsstatistik 2014. Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Editing: Sabine Fauland
Design: Andreas Pirchner

Serfaus, Parish Museum

First opening August 2014

No temporary

Construction: adapted existing older building

Exhibits: relating to theology & religious belief

Permanent Exhibition

Installed since 2014

No duration limit

Size: 200 m²

Cost: 130,000 €

Financing: 99 % own funds (Serfaus Parish)

Running operation: 45% parish, 5% admission, 15% sponsoring, 35% subvention

1000 – 2000 visitors annually

Open Mon 9-12, Tue 16-18, Thu 19-21

Open Dec-April and June-Oct (tourist season)

Voluntary staff

Locals hardly involved, exception: 2016 with *Modern Gardening –Pfarrgarten neu interpretiert*

Special profile: Embedded in an ensemble of historic sacral buildings with garden

Serfaus is one of the oldest parishes in Tyrol

AWARDS

1. Österreichisches Museumsgütesiegel / Austrian Museum Seal of Quality (awarded Fall 2019)
2. Tyrolean Museum Prize 2016 (project prize for “Modern Gardening – parish garden newly interpreted”)

Galtür, Alpinarium

First opening 2003

Exhibitions: *Die Lawine (The Avalanche)*, *Die Zukunft der Natur – Die Mauer (The Future of Nature – The Wall)*, etc.

Construction: newly built in 1990

Exhibits: relating to current, i.e. ecological issues

Permanent Exhibition

Installed since 2013 *GANZ OBEN/AT THE VERY TOP*

Duration 10 years

Size: 820 m² (+ 200 m² Special Exhibits)

Cost: 546,000 €

Financing: 75% public funding (Leader + Tyrolean State)

Running operation: 85% admission, 15% sponsoring, 0% subvention

28,000 – 65,000 visitors annually

Open Tue-Sun 10-18

Open during the tourist season

Employed staff

Locals involved through loaners and family history

Special profile: Incorporated into a 345 meter long and 19 meter high avalanche protective wall

Alpinarium built after the catastrophic avalanche 1999

AWARDS

1. Österreichisches Museumsgütesiegel / Austrian Museum Seal of Quality
2. Tyrolean Wood Construction Award 2007
3. Special Distinction 2017 (European Museum Academy)

Two Museums in Comparison- The Similarities

Despite all differences, the challenges are similar:

- The seasonal opening times are linked to the operating hours of the cable cars and lifts.
- A year-round opening is pointless due to the constant renovation of the hotels in mid-season. The entire place is thus a major construction site and is unsuitable as a tourist destination.
- Museum visits are strongly correlated to the weather and are dependent on tourism. This results in the annually fluctuating visitor numbers.
- In Galtür, the opening of the Silvretta High Alpine Road also plays a role. The winter closure of this pass road is a serious factor for the Alpinarium. With a later opening of the road or in longer winters, admissions are reduced daily by 50 persons (1 busload).
- 1/3 of visitors come to the museum in winter and 2/3 in summer.
- While the Alpinarium already has a supporting association, Serfaus is just now founding one.
- Both museums endeavor to fulfill their research mission, the Alpinarium mainly through cooperations, the Parish Museum largely by in-house research or through its own staff.

The following examples show the variety of museum content and design in the Tyrolean ski regions:

Kitzbühel

The Museum of the City of Kitzbühel has an extensive collection of works by the Kitzbühel artist Alfons Walde (1891-1958). With his snowy landscapes, he has significantly influenced Tyrol's image as a snow-covered mountainous country. Under the pressure of the Hitler regime, tourism stagnated in the 1930s. Kitzbühel lost its international flair and Alfons Walde lost his art buyers. In high demand later on, the artist responded with paintings using repeated motifs and variants. Counterfeits also continue to infiltrate the art market.

Ischgl

In 2009, the Ischgl Cable Car Museum was completely renovated and refurbished. The Silvrettaseilbahn AG is able to document the development of cable car technology seamlessly from its pioneer days to date from its own collection. Ischgl's becoming one of the most successful ski areas in Austria is inseparably linked to the cable car.

St. Anton am Arlberg

The traditional presentation of the museum is a bit outdated. Interestingly, the permanent exhibition shows the early days of the world-famous ski school of St. Anton. Even sports enthusiasts of royal families learned to ski on the Arlberg. Tragic news was reported on the accident of Prince Johan Friso. The 43-year-old, second son of the Dutch Queen Beatrix, was covered by an avalanche on 17 February 2012 and later died.

Concluding Thoughts

In terms of popularity, the Alpinarium is far superior to the other museums mentioned. The tragic avalanche accident of 1999 is known to all Tyroleans. Even in the foreign media it received much attention at the time. Connecting to something familiar and well-known, and putting it into a new context is the ideal strategy, according to the findings of pedagogical science. It appears easy to arouse interest using this recipe for success.

Nevertheless, the Alpinarium was initially critically viewed upon by the local population. The criticism is directed against the allocation of state support. After the avalanche in 1999, the Tyrolean State provided a lot of funding for the museum project. The locals would have preferred that the subvention be invested in the ski area. The soon-after increasing acceptance is probably due to the success of the exhibitions and the documentary film "Galtür, a Village in the Mountains" by Lutz Maurer.

Climate change, environmental influences on alpine regions, etc. are the explosive issues that are made a subject of discussion in the Alpinarium. It sees itself primarily as an exhibition and documentation center about living in the high alpine region. In addition, it meets all the criteria of a museum, although some museum experts have criticized the low inventory of analogue originals as compared to the media presentations and the staging. Success proves the Alpinarium right. In addition, the merger with the local tourist board and the intensive marketing tied to it, contributed to its popularity.

The opposite in Serfaus: The fact that the parish of Serfaus exists for over 700 years and thus almost coincides with the founding of the State of Tyrol interests only a few; as does the sacral works of art from the various stylistic epochs from the Gothic to the First World War (1914-1918). The cross-border artist relationships reflected in the collection are also more likely to be appreciated by professionals. The mediation project "Modern Gardening – parish garden reinterpreted" (summer 2016) can be labeled as especially successful. The audience had the opportunity to discover plant motifs on works of art, to get to know the parish garden and even to plant traditional plants. The family-friendly project was awarded the Tyrolean Museum Prize.

The extent to which everyday life until after the Second World War (1939-1945) was determined by religious practice, has been forgotten today. How should the past and thus also the meaning of the Serfaus parish be brought back into the consciousness of the people? A merger with the other museums of the region might be appropriate to illuminate the everyday life of the various social classes in the region: Castle Laudegg as an administrative center, Museum *s'Paules* and *s'Seppls* House, as a former farm with shared ownership and the resulting disputes, and *Refuge St. Zeno* - a museum set on the foundations of the former residential tower (quasi castle) of the noble lords of Serfaus.

The fact that many things have to be done with locally available capacity is a matter of course in rural areas. Even Helmut Pöll, the project manager of the Alpinarium, is by trade a civil engineer. He took over the project management at the onset of the State exhibition, because at that time, he was the only one in Galtür who had experience in dealing with major projects. He brought with him interest in art, old crafts and history. "But the big challenge is always financing the projects. For me it was not easy to find a balance at first: how much freedom can I give the artists and the exhibition designers without exceeding the budgeted project costs?" (Helmut Pöll, Project Manager, Alpinarium Galtür)

The fact that cultural work represents an increase in the quality of life was not only published by the OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Often, spontaneous utterances describe a very memorable story: "The nicest thing about my job is the cooperation with many interesting people. I'm very proud of the many friendships that resulted from working in the Alpinarium." (Helmut Pöll, Project Manager, Alpinarium Galtür)