

Concerning a Women's Museum in a rural region

Elisabeth Stöckler, curator

"The woman's museum in Hittisau is a place, where traditionalism and feminism could find together." (Univ.-Prof. Dr. Edith Saurer, Historian)

Austria's women's museum was founded in 2000, it is the only one in Austria. It is located at Hittisau in the *Bregenzerwald*, a region in the western part of Austria. The object of the Women's Museum is to provide a contribution to the visibility of women's history, women's activities and capacities.

The purposes of the Women's Museum are

- Scientific research: The analysis and documentation of historical and actual living conditions of women and their production of everyday culture and art from a female viewpoint.
- Knowledge transfer: The presentation of these results in the context of a museum: exhibitions, educational activities for children, lectures, workshops, concerts, performances, etc. A central aspect of the women's museum is, that women of Hittisau inform the visitors about the topics of the exhibition.
- Organisation: The inclusion of women with different social backgrounds: old and young, high or low education, with children and without etc. Cooperation and learning together is an essential topic in the progress of the museum.

The regional environment of the Museum

Hittisau is a small village with about 1900 inhabitants. The region Bregenzerwald has about 30.000 inhabitants. In the past it was a traditionally agricultural region. Now there are only 14% of the population still working in that field, 50% are working in the services sector (most of them in tourism), but it is still a conservative and traditional region. Somehow it is a miracle, that the idea of a women's museum could be realized in such a closed society, which the Bregenzerwald is in a way. The society of this region is drawn between strong traditional values and openness for innovation. This controversy is based in history.



Architecture

It is an excellent example of a modern innovative kind of traditional wood processing. Three very different functions (fire brigade, local brass band, women's museum) are combined in one house. The ground floor is made of concrete, the rest of the house it built entirely from wood (silver fir, a traditional regional tree).

Activities

Since the opening in the year 2000, nineteen exhibitions including museum educational activities for children and youth and many accompanying events (lectures, workshops...) were carried out in the women's museum.