



## Museum for Contraception and Abortion, 2007

<http://en.muvs.org/>

Partner 8: Kunstverein Monochrom, Austria > Günther Friesinger

### Museum-Team:

Concept: DDr. Christian Fiala Research:

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Exhibition design and realization: Loidl oder Co., RAM Homepage,

Digital Archive: FOX medialab & design

### 1. Exhibition Concept

The Museum of Contraception and Abortion is the only museum in the world exclusively dedicated to contraception, pregnancy testing and abortion. It was founded as a private initiative in 2007 by gynaecologist Christian Fiala who is head of an ambulatory for abortion and family planning to which the museum is enclosed. His intention is to bring knowledge about reliable contraception and medically safe abortion to a very large number of people.

The retrospective exhibition shows important milestones in the research on the topic and the desperate attempts of centuries to control the fertility of women throughout the world. The collection, archive and library contain approximately 1500 objects, 1000 articles and 1000 books and attracts researchers as well as school classes. Not all of the items are shown in the exhibition but almost all can be accessed through the database on the website.

## **2. Reception**

It is a very controversial perceived museum with a lot of opposition. Everyday protestors try to keep people from entering the museum and the ambulatory and preventing them from take or even consider their right of self-determined abortion. The response of the media is very controversial as well.

Nevertheless it is the only museums in the world dealing with this topic in this way and putting it in a historical and scientific context.

Every month almost 20 school classes make their way to the centre of vienna to find profound and well formatted knowledge. In 2009 the museum was awarded with the 'Austrian Museums Seal of Quality' and 2010 it was honoured with the 'Keneth Hudson Price' from the European Museums Forum for its extraordinary achievements in raising public awareness of the museum's vision and values.

## **3. Exhibition Design**

The exhibition consist of two rooms, one dedicated to contraception and the other one to abortion. Lightboxes stacked on all side of the walls display a conglomeration of images, diagrams, body-models, objects of every day life, books and information sheets. In addition the visitor can choose of 38 videos depicting different topics.

In one corner of the abortion-room a typical interior of a kitchen was rebuilt to show in what kind of surrounding abortions took place in the former days. An audioguide system can be picked up at the entrance of the museum to guide through the exhibition in different languages and to offer additional information.

## **4. Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation**

The main focus of the museum lies in giving a profound information to young people to help them with the choice of reliable contraception and understanding their own fertility. Secondly it is a ongoing collection of artefacts on scientific and social impacts from the history of contraception and abortion.

Therefore everyone is called to participate in with whatever is worth collecting or lending to the museum. The team of the museum is also doing personal interviews with contemporary witnesses, politicians, doctors, advocates and other health care practitioners and they have a primary interest in records of how women and their families are directly impacted by the methods, politics and social repercussions of contraception and abortion.

A very important approach is that most of the information which is exhibited in the museum can be accessed online and for free. The website offers a virtual exhibition-tour and the audioguide of the museum can also be reached via a cellphone number with no additional costs. This all is done to take away the fear of the unknown and bring people to the museum.



## **5. Conclusion: in respect to the COP1 and COP2**

**Toolkit 1** – to make Europe visible: The aim of the museum is to show Europe in every respect and to bring tabooed topics to a broader audience. The museum is not just a place for displaying history but also a place to actively discuss actual social questions.

**Toolkit 2** – integrating cultural Europe (social arena): The museum makes information accessible for people of all ranks and not just for the typical museum-visitor. The aim of the museum is to throw light on a topic which concerns all people to educate the next generations and to change the perspective on this topic on a broader level.

**Toolkit 3** – activation, participation and & role modification: The people can have an active role and can contribute to the collection if they have objects or stories to donate - the victims of bad sex education can contribute to a better sex education for the next generation and can reflect the social changes. The museum is a place to get essential information about a differentiated topic what is very important for the potential patients of the ambulatory.

**Toolkit 4** – synaesthetic translation of perspective: Not applicable.

**Toolkit 5** - Social web and interaction: The museum has a proper equipped website with a lot of press-articles and an online database for the collection of the museum. The museum provides all information and knowledge on the web for free so it can easily be found by people who need it and don't have to feel themselves as outsiders.

