



ARCHITECTS

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GmbH, London

BUILD TIME

Competition: 1999

Start of construction:

Autumn 2001

Opening: 27 September 2003

COST

Plot: approx. 8 million euros

Construction costs:

approx. 40 million euros

AREA

Usable floor space: 11,100 m²

Exhibition space: 2,500 m²

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Height of Kunsthau: approx. 23 metres

Bubble: span approx. 60 metres

Weight: 3.9 million kg

Needle: approx. 40-metre long and 4-metre wide
viewing platform

Travelator: two moving walkways, each approx. 30
metres long

Skin: 1,288 blue acrylic glass panels, each panel
made individually

BIX Façade: 926 circular fluorescent lamps on the
front of the Kunsthau, controlled individually

Nozzles: 16 light openings, one looking towards the
Clock Tower (Schlossberg nozzle)



BACKGROUND & LOCATION

Back in the 1980s, there were already hopes of
building an exhibition venue for modern and con-
temporary art in Graz. In 1998 it became clear
that Graz would be European Capital of Culture in
2003, and so a competition was again held for an
"independent museum of contemporary art with
its own distinctive identity".

The location was moved in the plans to the right
bank of the River Mur, with the aim of linking the
two halves of Graz, and above all to revitalise the
then much neglected neighbourhood between the
Lend and Gries districts of the city.

THE IRON HOUSE

Built by Josef Benedict Wit-
halm in 1848, this was one of
the first cast-iron buildings in
continental Europe. In 2003,
the iron façade was uncovered
and the original design of the
building was restored.



ARCHITECTURE



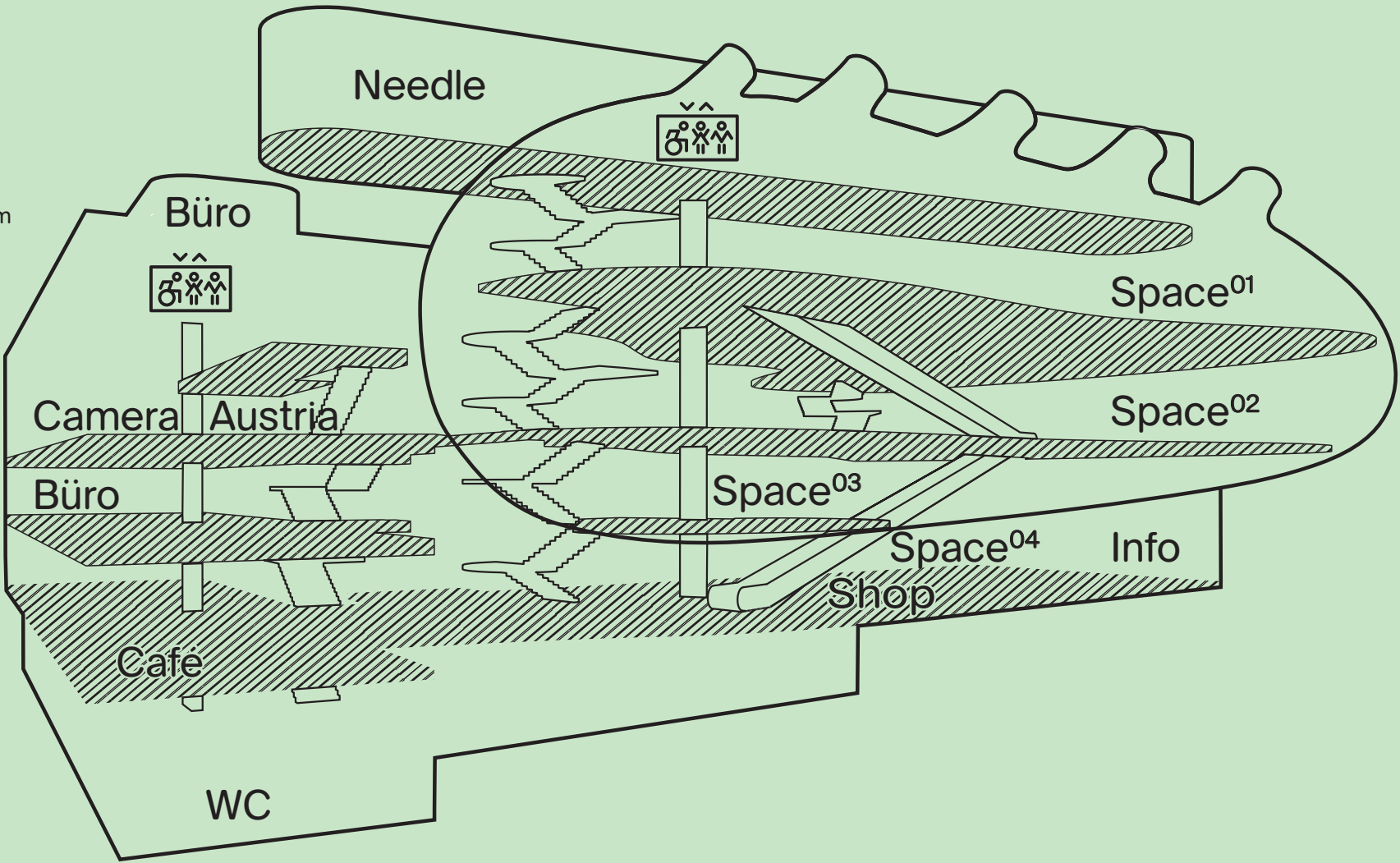
A FRIENDLY ALIEN

The nickname given to the Kunsthaus, the "Friendly Alien", comes from its unique shape. Known as bio-morphic, this kind of architecture takes its inspiration from organic forms and living things. These free-flowing designs were made possible by the new software technology at that time. Biomorphic building forms in urban spaces were already a well-developed vision in the 1960s.



DIVISION INTO SPACES

The blue bubble of the Kunsthaus is divided into four floors, numbered from top to bottom. The Space04 event room forms part of the foyer. From here, a travelator carries visitors up into Space02, the first large exhibition space. The Space03 art education room lies between them. Right at the top, beneath the imposing domed ceiling, extends the Space01 exhibition space. The Needle rests on the building at the very top.



Space⁰¹



Space⁰²



Space⁰³



Space⁰⁴



SPACE⁰¹

The Nozzles in Space01 project out up to 8.5 metres above the floor, which sits like a tabletop on the columns of the space below. They can be used to adjust the amount of daylight entering the room. The stretching and flowing form of the architecture shapes the space.

SPACE⁰²

The wall curves outwards and is called the *Skin*. The grey, fine-mesh wire-weave of the walls reflects the basic structure of the building in triangular sections. Inside, the space is only divided by load-bearing columns. A view of the outside is only possible through three hidden windows.

SPACE⁰³

Space03 is the art education space, and provides a base for all of the education formats offered. Visitors can climb up the sloping walls of the suspended steel structure and, by experiencing the space, get a better understanding of the architecture.

SPACE⁰⁴

On the ground floor, Space04 serves as a versatile event space. The glass front onto the inner courtyard offers a view of the façade opposite, featuring a geometric abstract mural by the artist Esther Stocker.

NEEDLE

The Needle is a glass viewing platform that rests on the top of the building. It seems to float about 24 metres above the ground and is only fixed to the steel construction at its centre. Just like a needle it sticks into the blue bubble while stitching the Kunsthaus into its surroundings, so that it blends in visually.

BIX

The BIX media façade (BIX = Big Pixel) was designed by the Berlin-based architects realities:united. It is made up of 926 individually controlled fluorescent tubes that can be switched on and off up to 24 times per second. Its changing displays – often created by artists – offer an important medium of communication and interaction with the city. It is powered by a photovoltaic system, meaning that the sun determines how long it will stay lit.

Needle



BIX

