

Universalmuseum Joanneum Press

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Kunsthhaus Graz. 1 x 1 Nozzle, Needle, Blue Bubble & Co

Bubble – The Bubble is the blue corpus of the Kunsthhaus Graz, whose biomorphous structure floats over the light, airy lobby and nestles organically into the existing architectural fabric of the inner-city conservation area. It is clad in a total of 1,288 blue-tinted, semi-transparent Plexiglass panes, with 1,100 of them on the outside and 188 inside the Kunsthhaus Graz.

Eisernes Haus – The Eisernes Haus (lit. Iron Building) completed in 1848 was the first cast-iron structure in Austria and one of the earliest cast-iron buildings on the European mainland. Designed by architect Josef Benedict Wittthalm (1771-1864), the building is innovative for the period not only in the novel structure but also in its large window apertures and flat roof. These form a lively correlation with the distinctive architecture of the Kunsthhaus Graz.

Needle – The Needle rests on the Bubble. It is a 40m/131' long glazed gallery linking the old Eisernes Haus (the historic, listed part of the Kunsthhaus Graz) and the new Bubble. The Needle was designed as a viewing gallery, offering our visitors a splendid view of both the old city of Graz and the Kunsthhaus Bubble.

Nozzle – Sixteen 'nozzles' project from the fabric of the Bubble, fifteen of them facing north, one looking east towards the Clock Tower, the traditional emblem of the city, therewith setting up a dialogue between the old and new emblems of the Styrian capital.

Skin – Beneath the blue Plexiglass panes of the cladding of the Friendly Alien is a fine-mesh matt-grey wire-weave broken down into triangles. Together they form a homogeneous smooth surface. As with the human body, there are muscles and vein systems beneath the skin. In the Kunsthhaus, these take the shadowy, discernible form of the steel frame and vital technical installations.

Space01 – Everything's different at the Kunsthaus Graz. Not just the spatial experience – even the way the floors are numbered. In the Friendly Alien, the floor numbering starts not at the bottom but at the top. So Space01 is the final, topmost floor at the Kunsthaus Graz, and also the most ambitious. With its 8.5m/28' maximum ceiling height and distinctive nozzles, this exhibition space resembles a vaulted, cathedral-style hall that brings out the biomorphous character of the building most powerfully, but at the same time constitutes a challenging environment for artists and exhibition designers.

Space02 – 'Up into the unknown' was a comment written on one of the first roughs by Peter Cook and Colin Fournier, the architects of the Friendly Alien. It describes this exhibition space well, which is in contrast to Space 01 an introverted, hermetic room that facilitates new ways of presenting large-format pictures. A passage to the exhibition rooms of Camera Austria and the administrative wing of the Kunsthaus Graz links the Bubble and the Eiserne Haus (the two most distinctive architectural components of the Kunsthaus Graz) at this level.

Space03 – Sloping walls, the back of the Travelator, peepholes into the lobby and café of the Kunsthaus Graz and a cosy atmosphere – Space03 is the children's zone of the Kunsthaus. Our younger visitors are thrilled with the playground architecture. Apart from workshops for children, Space03 is also used for lectures, press conferences and various other events.

Space04 – Space04 is at the back of the Kunsthaus Graz and shows how closely the Friendly Alien snuggles up to the existing historic conservation area. It is designed to be a multifunctional events room, and draws its charisma not from the highly charged correspondence between the Bubble and the glass façade but the outlook towards the façade of the house next door, designed by South Tyrolean artist Esther Stocker.

Travelator – The travelator, also called 'Pin', is a 30m/100' moving walkway carrying visitors from the light, airy lobby up into the belly of the Friendly Alien.