

Christian Bachhiesl
Jürgen Tremer

The Making and the Work of the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology

Jürgen Tremer: The making of the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology

The first time we got involved with the Museum for Criminology in the year 2000, when the collection was once again in danger – and this time it was really endangered in its existence, because its building should be demolished. Therefore our order was to rescue the collection from destruction. Until then the Collection had a changeful history: Founded in 1896 at the Criminal Court in Graz by the “father of Criminology” - Hans Gross; relocated into his started-up University-Institute 1912; after 4 years the next relocation and afterward many further relocations.



We came upon a Collection being in a neglected condition. It was not maintained for more than 30 Years and it was not accessible in these years. The so called museum was more like a storeroom. We had to deal with ammunition, explosives and poisons.



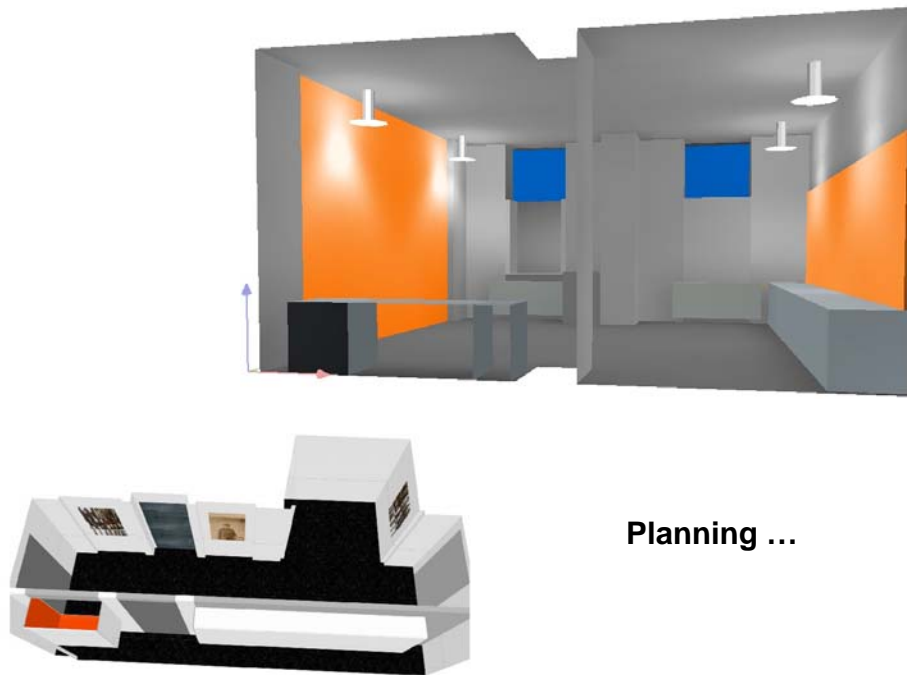
Presentation until 2000



Decisive for the realization of the project "Museum of Criminology new" were two personalities: Prof. Dr. Gernot Kocher (1; 4), then Dean of the Faculty of Law, University Graz, and Dr. Michael Suppanz (2), then director of administration, who initiated the rebuilding of the museum. Dr. Suppanz, who was the last scientific assistant at the former Department of Criminology, procured the new location. The old location (3) was intended for demolition. Dean Kocher realised the impending loss of the unique collection, which was and fortunately still is a core piece of the various scientific collections of the University Graz and a symbol for its international scientific importance, and provided the financial basis. So the planning phase could start and the reconstruction began.



The hitherto conceptual design was unsuitable for a modern presentation. The scientific classification was made in the 1930ies and is outdated for decades. The presentation of the objects didn't take care of conservational treatments and hazardous objects were unsecured and approachable for everyone.



Planning ...

My aim was not just to rescue the collection from destruction, but also to make it accessible to the public as a real museum. I tried to approximate the new conception to the concept of the founding father Hans Gross, namely to present the enormous variety of crime with its enormous variety of different corpora delicti. The Museum should be a depot for Hans Gross' enormous collection as well as an attraction for public and as a seminar room for teaching materials for students and experts.



2001 / 2002

The work begins



Our limitations were an initial room of just 50 m², various and uncertain contracts of employment and a budget of EUR 36.000. The Dean, Prof.Kocher, approved our conception and strategic planning and gave us the chance work on our own responsibility. So it was possible to start the building of the Museum.



But even in this early phase we considered to begin public relations and imparting the history of criminology.



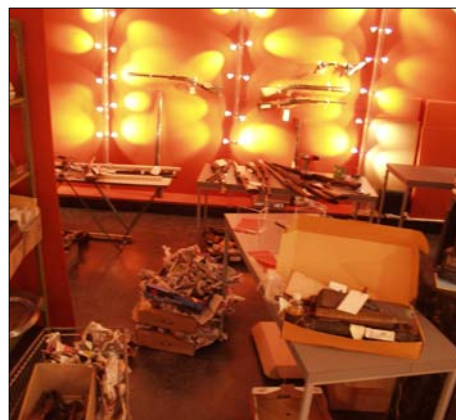
... working ...



After the work of the craftsmen was done, the team, which was engaged with the triage during the month before, started the realisation of the plans. Here an example for one of the details – the mountings for our weapons which were designed by us and which were especially manufactured for us. They are metallurgical harmless, are nearly invisibly and let our weapons appear vivid and 3-dimensional.



**Building the
Museum**



close to resurrection

Everyone who is busy with such projects knows that sometimes it seems that everything is sinking into chaos during the procedure and that the working days become longer and longer and that you are afraid of succeeding the duties. Some very good friends felt our enthusiasm and supported us and so it was possible to inaugurate the new birth of the Museum in February 2003.



In this picture you can see one of the main parts of the museum. The visitors are fascinated by the variety of objects, the short description of the cases and the destiny of the victims and they can learn about the modus operandi of criminals. But there is also the possibility for our guides to let some interested visitors or experts explore more objects concerning a certain field in our drawers. So the guide can provide insights to some hidden secrets of the museum to the visitors.

The new Hans Gross Museum of Criminology – main show room

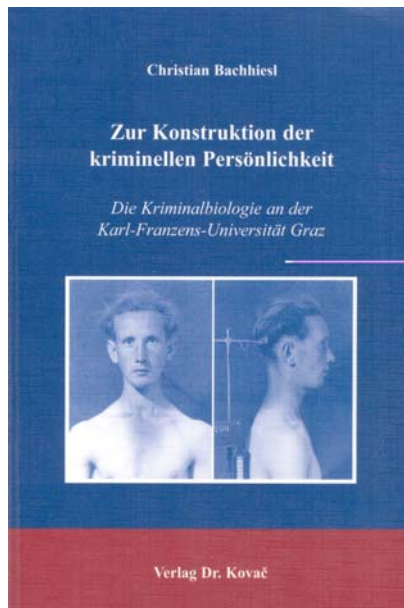


The transparency in the form of presentation of the weapon-collection should let the object by itself be in the limelight, not its staging. So there is a seemingly non-existence of show-cases – just the mystique of the basement vault of the University of Graz should tell the visitor that the Museum of Hans Gross came back to the place where everything started more than 100 years ago.

Christian Bachhiesl: The work of the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology

Building the museum was just one part of the tasks we had to fulfil; once the museum was built, we had to run it. For this purpose, the resources are very limited: The job is done by three people, Christian Bachhiesl (who is paid for six hours per week), Jürgen Tremer (also 6 hrs/week) and Inge Gartler (20 hrs/week) – so the various tasks are carried out by three people, who – together – get paid not even $\frac{3}{4}$ of a full-time job. Enthusiasm and idealism are therefore imperative for the functioning of this small museum.

Since it is part of a university, the basis for the work of the museum is scientific research.



The research results provide the material for the imparting and communicating activities. So the history and scientific-methodological as well as political and sociological impacts of the Graz school of criminology, which had a great international importance during the 20th century, were (and still continue to be) examined, and the results of this research work are presented in books (Christian Bachhiesl, *Zur Konstruktion der kriminellen Persönlichkeit. Die Kriminalbiologie an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz*, Hamburg 2005; Christian Bachhiesl, *Der Fall Josef Streck. Ein Sträfling, sein Professor und die Erforschung der kriminellen Persönlichkeit*, Wien 2006) and other publications. The scientific work is so to say the backbone of the communication of the position of criminology in history and science.



The most important instrument of imparting the results of the research work is guided tours. Of course, visitors can explore the museum by themselves, if they want to, but we always offer the possibility of a guided tour, which most of the visitors appreciate. The guides can ask the visitors for their special interests and can offer made-to-measure tours, at least if the group of visitors is not too big. Usually, a guided tour lasts about one hour and deals with a lot of different topics, reaching from the presentation of historical crime cases to the various historical and modern techniques of criminal investigation. The visitors are confronted with a broad range of *corpora delicti* and with the cases and stories connected with these objects. Guided tours are offered during the regular opening hours of the museum (every Monday, 10 am to 3 pm) and whenever groups of visitors wish to see the museum and contact us by phone or e-mail. We open the museum also in the evening and on weekends and offer guided tours in German, English and French.

**Reading „Der Fall
Josef Streck“
(June 2006)**



These activities are completed by special events, which are an important part of our communication work. For example, we organize readings and presentations of books. The readings present scientific texts as well as artistic writings and literature, as long as these texts deal

with themes connected to crime and criminology. Heinz Auernig's crime thriller "Bell Canto" was presented in the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology, and also Martin Auer's "Huren-taxi", a book that tells the experience the author – usually an author of books for children – collected when working for some months as a cab driver for a call girl agency. Another reading titled "Gross gegen Gross" was performed by Gerhard Balluch, an actor, and Gerhard M. Dienes, the former director of the City Museum of Graz; Hans Gross, the founding father of the museum and a man of law and order, had a son, Otto Gross, who was an anarchist and who wanted to replace the bourgeois model of the family by free love and a lot of revolution. Texts written by or about these two contrasting characters were presented during this reading "Gross vs. Gross". Another event taking place in the museum was the stage play "Bartsch, Kindermörder", performed by the actor Franz Josef Strohmeier. This one-man-play is about a German murderer, who abused and killed four children in the Ruhr area in the 1960^{ies}.

These presentations, readings and plays are just some few examples for the events taking place at the Criminal Museum, which sometimes are organized in cooperation with various scientific and artistic institutions (theatres, "steirischer herbst", radio "Ö1", etc.); all these events are combined with small buffets, where we offer drinks and snacks and where the audience has the opportunity to meet and discuss with the authors, artists and scientists who present their works and performances. The visitors appreciate these opportunities for getting in touch with the artists and scientists very much – sometimes the evening lasts until long after midnight.

The most important event for the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology is the "Long Night of Museums", an event organized every year by the Austrian Broadcasting Company (ORF). During this night, one quarter of the annually registered visitors comes to the museum, where every thirty minutes a guided tour starts; 2006 more than 1000 visitors were counted during the "Long Night", in fact a huge number when compared to the square meters of the museum (ca. 100, just about 40 in the main show room). The guided tours were complemented by a concert of the band "Wiener Blues", which consists of three policemen singing songs of the Viennese underworld. For the Criminal Museum, the "Long Night of Museums" is a very successful and important event and the highlight of the year.

Despite its small budget and its limited resources, the Hans Gross Museum of Criminology is a flourishing institution, fuelled mainly by the idealism of the three people running it: Inge Gartler, Jürgen Tremmer and Christian Bachhiesl. The increasing numbers of visitors show, that there is a public interest in the museum: reopened in 2003, the Criminal Museum attracted in 2004 ca. 2300, in 2005 ca. 2800, and in 2006 ca. 4000 visitors. This year, 2007, probably more than 5000 visitors will be registered; at the end of August, more than 3000 already have visited the museum. The Hans Gross Museum of Criminology has a great potential as a connecting and communication point between the Karl-Franzens-University of Graz and the broad public. Hopefully the university management will take this fact into account.

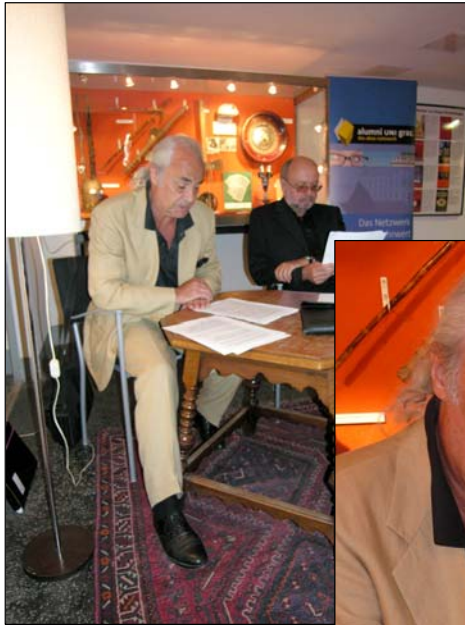
**Stage-play „Bartsch,
Kindermörder“ (June 2007)**





**Reading „Hurentaxi“
(April 2007)**





**Reading „Gross gegen
Gross“ (May 2007)**

