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Open Concept for Traditional Rituals

In June 2012, after several years of preparation and an expertly led participative planning process, the Muslim graveyard in Altach was opened (only the second in Austria after the one in Vienna). It is clear that the graveyard has been widely well accepted. One hundred years after the recognition of Islam as a religion in Austria, this project was developed on the basis of regional and Islamic building traditions and expresses the idea of integration represented by all participants. That this acceptance is not self-evident is shown by many infamous examples from the recent past. The mayor of Altach admitted in his speech that he was surprised by the numerous positive reactions to the project. In contrast to the...
meaning in consideration of the transience of all earthly things. In Vorarlberg today there are about 38,000 Muslims, about 10% of the population, and Muslims are the second largest religious community after the Catholics. Many families came to this region as ‘guest workers’ to work in the textile industry in the 1960s. As long as they still felt themselves to be ‘temporary citizens’, expensive transport back home after death was the only appropriate solution. The repatriation of burials to a Christian cemetery, as is the case in some other Austrian districts, was considered, but declined, because the ritual requirements of an Islamic funeral could not be satisfied in this way. As the total number of immigrants aged over 60 has been continuously rising in recent years, and roots in the new society intensifying, there has been increased attention in Vorarlberg ritual correct funerals. The Association of Vorarlberg Communities, the district government, the Islamic community, Catholic church and an expert committee dedicated to the problem of integration named ‘okay, zusammen leben’, (okay living together) pooled their resources to develop the recently realized solution—a separate graveyard for Muslims of all confessions under communal patronage. The Althach community sold the plot of land to the

Jasna linearna struktura hıdav-e-nemom bojom obručenih zidnih ploča od vidljivog betona razlikuje visine obuhvata pet grobnica zena orijentiranih prema Meču sa 700 grobova, a građevni kompleks sadrži mitražnicu, dvoranu za oporodiste, Association of Vorarlberg Communities, and was ready to accept official patronage of the project. The competition by invitation was won by Bernardo Bader. Up until that moment, the young architect from Dombirn had attracted attention primarily with his elegant, harmonious wooden buildings. In 2004 he showed sensibility in treating the existing village centre with a new design of the Krunbach cemetery. The architect was supported by an expert group (Arbeitsgruppe Bau) of citizens in resolving the particular problems of an Islamic graveyard, while he also received assistance from the imams of the Islamic Community of Vorarlberg on questions of ritual. The construction costs of £2.3 million were covered by the State, the Association of Communities and the Islamic Religious Community. The graveyard of 8,500 m² is located along the Brno state road, on the south-eastern edge of Altach, bordered by the communities of Hohenems to the East and Götzens to the West. This part of the Rhine valley clearly shows how much the 29 surrounding settlements have merged into a homogeneously inhabited area over time, so that the borders of communities have faded away. A clear linear structure of concrete wall plates painted in rust red and varied in size encompasses five graveyard zones oriented towards Mecca, with 700 graves. The complex contains a morgue, the funeral hall open towards...
etapama i integriraju gabyrin u nedimini prostor močvarnog krajobraja. Već pri ulasku na groblje iznadaču se raspolazena sinteza 'građevine umjetnosti Vorašberga' i odjek svetsku tradiciju. Drugačije nego kod bečkog muslimanskog groblja ovde je pasje izostavili simbolički stereotipi, nova umjetnička obnovenja interpretacija naša je put k pozitivnim simbolima koji ne dijeljuje osećaj ili nametlivo. U velikom praznošću otvor na uzdužnom zidu dvorane za oproštaje ugrađena je rešetka sličnih elenem the swampy landscape. *When entering the graveyard, we are surprised by the relaxed synthesis of Vorašberg construction art and the reflections of Islamic tradition. Unlike Vienna's Muslim graveyard, symbolic stereotypes are completely missing, the new artistic and artistic interpretation found its way to familiar symbols that are neither banal nor flashy. A solid grid of domestic oak is fixed to the large window on the longer wall of the funeral hall, referring to the eight-pointed symbol that uses the play of light and shadow to appear oriental and to reflect: the rich tradition of Islamic ornaments. This subtle play is framed by a robust, almost rough structure using the values and tranquillity of the used materials — concrete, oak, brass, and grey gravel. Each functional element, like the 12 circular skylights in the funeral hall, remains from the visual point of view, as a part of the homogenous spatial impression, in the background. In the prayer hall, designed by the Bosnian-Austrian artist Azra Aksamija, the link of traditional and regional elements with spiritual and Islamic ones is also clearly emphasized. In front of the white prayer wall (plokoh), with the central window opening marking the prayer niche (mihrob), the artist hung three separate metal mesh curtains with interwoven wooden plates. The golden-plated plaques bear the names 'Allah' and 'Mohammed' in Arabic. These calligraphic elements oscillate between legibility, abstraction and a function as a curtain producing shadows. Instead of multi-coloured industrial prayer mats, often found in Islamic prayer halls, here we find six monochrome carpets — with colour tones from dark to light — and the carpets were made in Bosnia. The hybrid spatial impression, between the comfort of a country house living room and the spirituality of a modern prayer hall, shows the possibilities of finding a common contemporary language for the community and co-existence of two or more cultural traditions. Azra Aksamija's artistic work — for example, her 'Dirdimoschee' (a mosque in traditional Austrian costume) — shows that a mixed society needs to find new cultural codes and symbols. The Muslim graveyard in Altach, with its clear commitment for contemporary architecture, is a good example. This is the most convincing project in Austria until now that has found an appropriate architectural equivalent for the social and political requirement of integration.*