

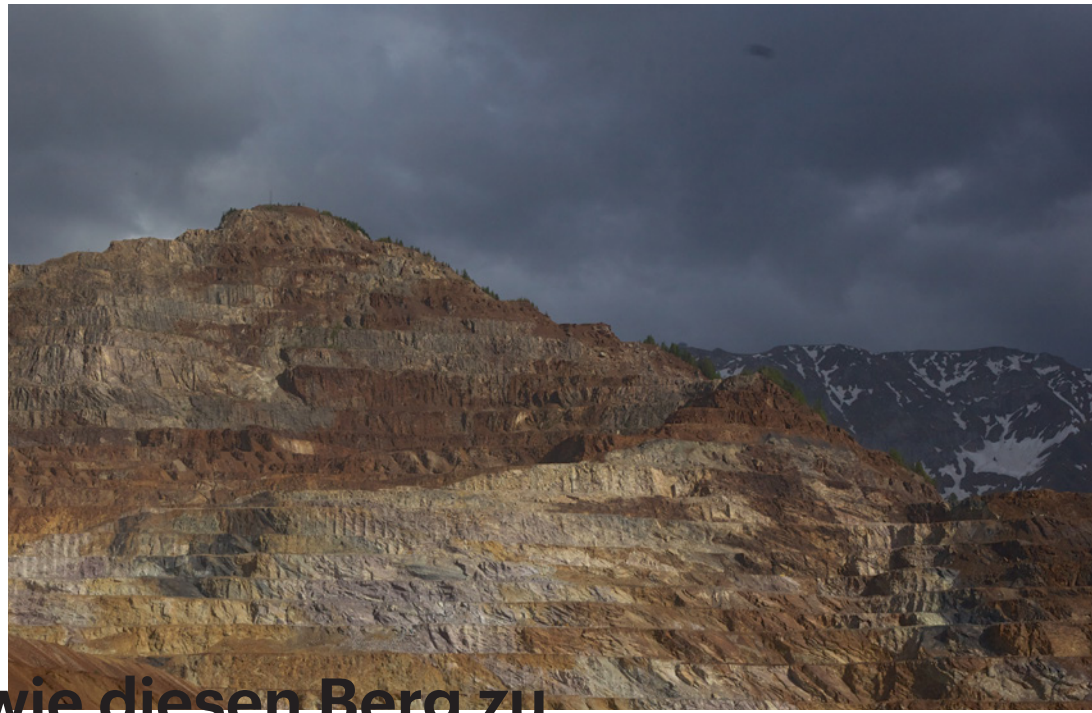
Diploma Thesis

'The Erzberg Triptych – The Aesthetic Insanity'

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Landscape Design Department, Timothy Richardson, University of Applied Arts, June 2014

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“So etwas wie diesen Berg zu haben ist eine Sensation.”

– Richard Kriesche, Artist

My diploma project ‘The Erzberg Triptych – The Aesthetic Insanity’ is a critique of the concepts and studies that have been made about Eisenerz so far. I ask the question ‘Does it make sense to make another development plan or is art able to contribute more to Eisenerz?’

The goal of this work is to make the relationship between media, studies and citizens visible to give outsiders a chance to get a deeper understanding of the individuals of Eisenerz.

Through particular interests in utopian/dystopian concepts and industrial wastelands I developed a relationship with the mountain Erzberg and its associated town of Eisenerz.

One thing I learnt during my studies at the University of Applied Arts Vienna was that nearly every design (e.g. architecture, landscape design) based on the concept of creating something that could actually be realized is not interesting for me. If the project is not visionary or insane it is not interesting for me. There is no picture that stays in my mind.

I rather have a distinct interest for post-apocalyptic scenarios, especially landscapes in utopian/dystopian sci-fi or fantasy settings. Where are the landscapes that don't seem to be from this planet? How can a landscape that actually exists be so unreal? Why is the landscape of Avatar just a flat plastic-pop exaggeration of a more vivid real landscape and not more?

I was born and raised in Styria, the green heart of Austria, a province that prides itself of being a land of beauty. However, beauty doesn't interest me either. I ask myself if there is any place in Styria that is not beautiful. What is the ugliest town, the town with the most negative connotations? Where is the town where nobody wants to live anymore?

At the end it was pretty easy to find a town in Styria where nobody wants to be and that actually has a unique landscape – EISENERZ.

The landscape Erzberg-Eisenerz is an unusual example for a synthesis between a town and a mountain. You cannot separate the entities from each other. They are both equally important for the . The landscape Erzberg-Eisenerz is in the middle of a metamorphosis from an industrial landscape to a post-industrial landscape.

At the beginning of my research I was sure that I will make a masterplan for a post-industrial landscape park, but then I realized that so many urban planners, architects and landscape designers already did the same with no significant outcomes. Equivalently astonishing was the amount of case studies and concepts developed for this place, all with very little or no influence on the actual life of the people in Eisenerz.

So I asked myself the question 'Why?'. Well, maybe the people never heard of it, read one of those studies or there was an epic misunderstanding in the overall communication. But I was proven wrong: The citizens heard of the concepts for their town and they know a few of them.

So I asked myself the following question: 'If all these concepts, studies, design didn't do much, does it make sense to make another study confined by the boundaries of having to please stakeholders, meet random hurdles in bureaucracy and ultimately being annihilated by political power play?' Instead I told myself I have to use a different medium, to tread another path as the people before me did. 'What can art do where channels are not able to communicate anymore?'



Reanimation für sterbende Stadt Eisenerz, 02.03.2004, Kurier

The work consists of three artworks in the background and three sculptures in front of them. Altogether they form a triptych. Each part of the triptych represents a different view on the town Eisenerz – the scientific perspective, the inside-view and the media landscape. These views developed through an intense research phase and attempt to understand the town/mountain relationship on as many levels as possible. The artworks are the documentary part of my thesis. They are the backbone for the sculptural interpretation of the analysis.

The first artwork is an examination of 64 studies that have been made about the city Eisenerz and how successful those studies were in terms of relevance, accomplishment, usage and implementation – scientific perspective. The second artwork is a documentation of quotes I collected from my conversations with 14 people who dealt with EE to get a deeper insight in the social, cultural, economical and political fabric – inside-view. For the last artwork I examined all articles the media wrote about Erzberg-Eisenerz from 1997 to 2014 to understand the correlation between the negative opinion the broad public has about EE and the role media plays in this opinion-making process – media landscape.

In my sculptural work I manifest each artwork in the background into a physical counter piece in terms of materiality, level of abstraction and haptic. They also represent my personal perspective about the future of Eisenerz.

Research

To get a deeper understanding and knowledge of Eisenerz and the current discourse about post- industrial landscapes I used sources from the library of the University of Applied Arts, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna University of Technology, Central Library Vienna and data from the Graz University of Technology. Through this research process I was able to formulate my own artistic approach.

Conversations

For my artistic work it was necessary to know what the citizens think about their town. I needed insight to how this symbiosis of the Erzberg and Eisenerz functions. The social, cultural, economical and political fabric of Eisenerz and their inhabitants were essential for my project. To archive this I choose not to make semi-structured expert interviews. Instead I tried to get in touch with my conversation partners in a more individual way. I started the talk with 3 basic questions, not more, to stay as informal as possible.

- 1) Are you born and raised in Eisenerz?
- 2) Give me a brief biography about yourself. (e.g. A-levels, studies, job)
- 3) Why Eisenerz?

Studies

From 1972 to 2010 more than 64 studies were made of Eisenerz. This includes dissertations, diploma theses, studies and publications. The 64 studies were evaluated by Graz University of Technology from the institute for city- and building history. From these 64 studies only 14 were executed or the recommendation of the investigation implemented. My personal conclusion after the study of the evaluation was that it might not be wise to design something that is based on function, sustainability, sense and feasibility, otherwise the studies would have been more successful. Instead I felt I have to make a gesture, something impossible.

Media

I looked up and read many articles about EE from 1997 till 2014 then I compared the headlines of the articles if there were similarities in a longer time range about different issues or if certain themes came up again and again but in a different context. I read a lot, but the observation of the media was necessary to understand the view from outside on EE. I wanted to be both, part of EE and an outsider who is only capable to form his opinion through the media.



– SWiR Mag. Thomas Iraschko

I had 14 talks with totally different characters where I gathered altogether [13, 12 (7), 8 (2), 3, 18 (1), 4, 9, 5, 19, 11 (3), 7, 26] 135 quotes. Out of these 135 quotes I am not allowed to quote 13, not even anonymously. Additionally, I have captions from over 240 articles about Eisenerz, not to mention an exact evaluation of 64 studies that have been made of Eisenerz and the Erzberg. In consideration of the massive power the mountain has on the village I decided to translate the collected data into something holy, something transcendent, something timeless. A triptych. A triptych that shows each perspective on Eisenerz but still has a least common denominator – the Erzberg. Therefore I developed the idea to create for each view of the triptych a physical counter- piece in form of sculptures that display the topography seen from different angles on the Erzberg.



In industrialized Western countries, landscapes change massively through the de-industrialization. The aesthetic imperative of a 'beautiful' landscape has changed (Höfer 2001: p. 191). There is no more aesthetic imperative for landscapes. The post-industrial landscapes or abandoned urbanscape of Detroit can be as astonishing as the tropical rainforest in Amazonia in Brazil. This challenging aesthetic, sociological, ecological and economic process raises new questions. 'Landscape is at once a panorama, a composition, a palimpsest, a microcosm of social and economic conditions...' (Zukin 1993: p. 16) How do we deal with shrinking cities and de-industrialization? What are we going to do with huge contaminated wastelands (e.g. Chernobyl in Pripyat/Ukraine)? Do we give the land or territory back to nature?

Current trends tend to reuse those landscapes for tourism and make consumable event-landscapes out of the post-industrial landscapes (Züscher 1998, cited in Pflug 1998: p. 42). I am against this aestheticization of industrial- and post-industrial landscapes. I think everybody is capable of seeing the beauty in gross landscapes (Kühne 2005), therefore I claim it is not necessary to beautify (industrial) landscapes because latest studies already prove that the youth sees the aesthetic of a leftover space, whereas older generations still feel uncomfortable about these green (Uhrig 2012: p. 90) breaks in cities. It is the elegance of a de-industrialized place and the history behind it that makes those sites so overwhelming for me.

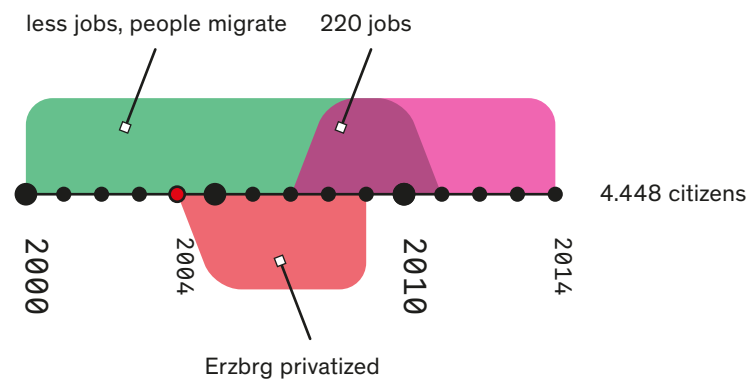
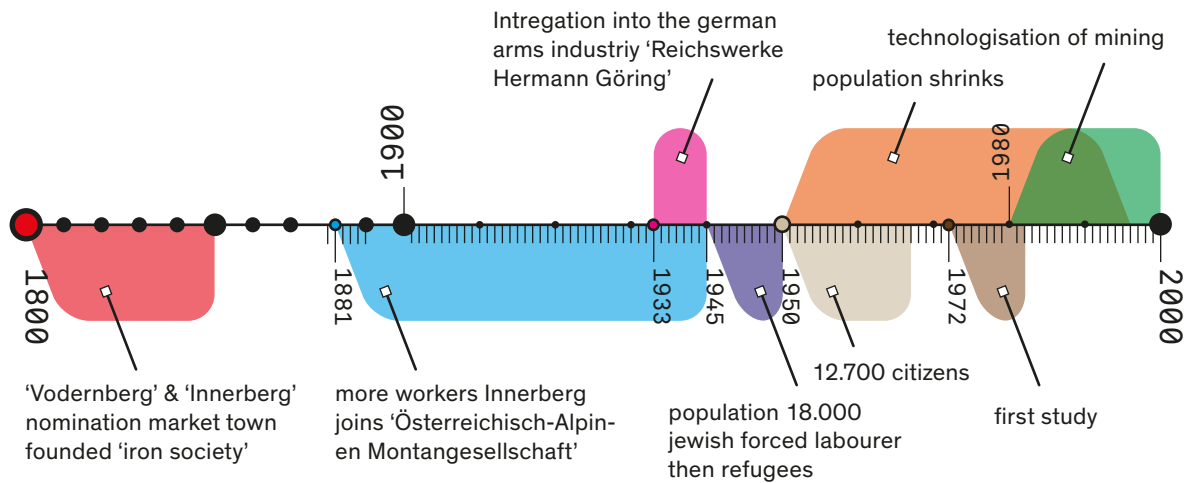
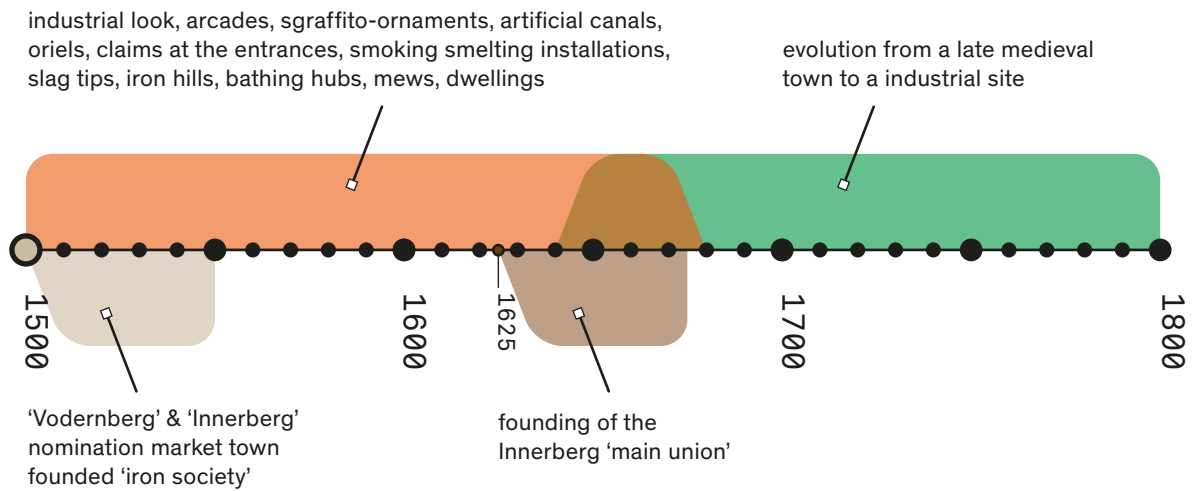
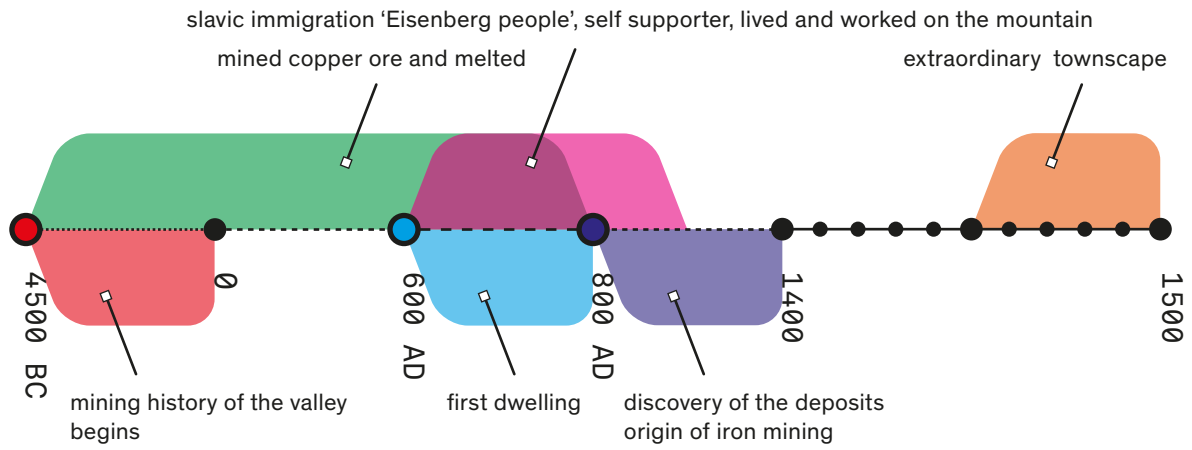
Zwischen Bangen und Hoffen Im einst so stolzen Eisenerz leben heute nur noch 4998 Menschen, 12.10.2010, Kronen Zeitung



Eisenerz

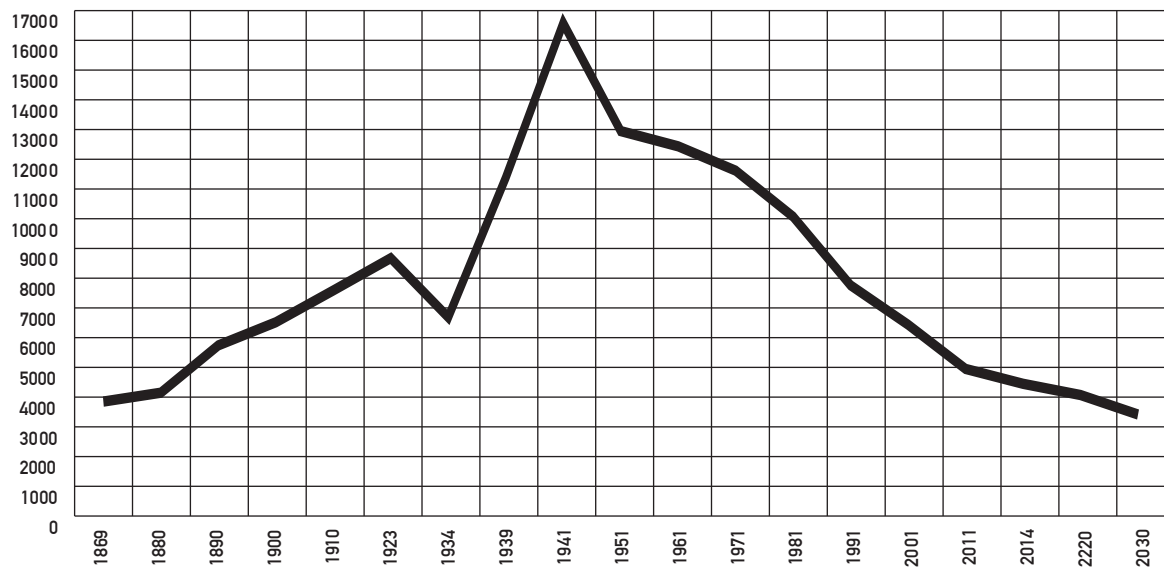
Eisenerz was formerly known as the heart of Austria's ore industry. During this time the term 'loaf of Styria' emerged for the 'Erzberg'. With the globalisation and technologization of the economy as well as the general mobilisation of the flow of goods and society, a radical shift began in the middle of the 80s of the 20th century. Today the same amount of ore is dismantled as 20 years ago, but only 10 percent of employees are needed for it. The consequence of the drastic reduction of jobs in the region was a migration of the population and a fall of the birth rate. The population number dropped from a peak in the 1950s with 13.000 inhabitants to a present state of less than 5.000 inhabitants – with a descending trend. Eisenerz is an example for a de-industrialized city where 'contradiction' is a central economic, political, social and cultural problem. In terms of population Eisenerz is one the most analysed communities in Austria (Nussmüller, Pichler & Rosseger 2006: p. 4).



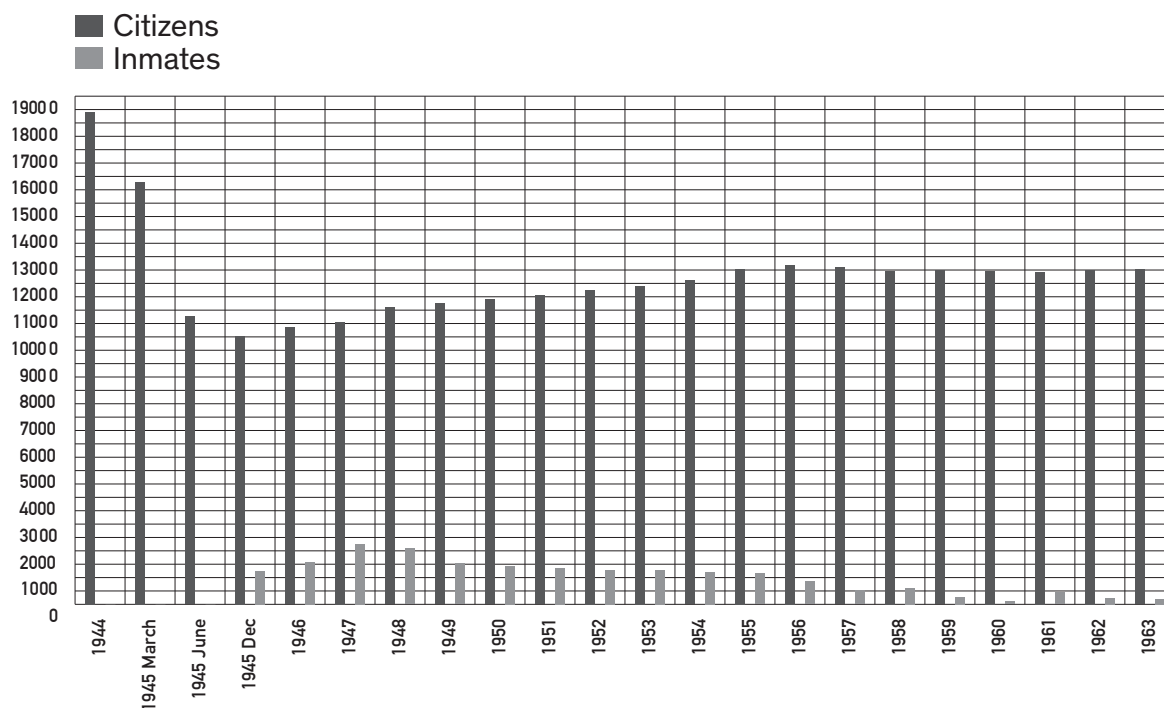


Population

At the moment exactly 4.448 (Iraschko 2014, pers. comm., 5 Mai) inhabitants live in Eisenerz. This equates to about 43% of Eisenerz's inhabitants around 1950 and means that the population of the town changed within nearly 60 years by almost 60% (own calculation).



Source: „redesign Eisenerz 2011“, Datasource: Stadtgemeinde Eisenerz, Statistik Austria, ÖROK



Source: Schmidt, Gudrun: Der Alpine – Arbeiter am steirischen Erzberg with special consideration of the NS - Zeit, Graz 2004, p. 24-24

Erzberg

The Erzberg is located in the north of Styria, Austria, 1465 m high, with a total area of approximately 6,5 km² (own calculation, measured from ÖK25V), is part of the 'Eisenerzer Alpen' and embedded into dense acres and glens, rugged limestone peaks with altitudes up to 2000 m. As the starting point of a valley branch the Erzberg is surrounded by small structured agriculture, forestry, villages and small towns. Due to the mountains this landscape area is rich in water – the environment is pervaded by numerous creeks and small rivers. The next big pond, the 'Leopold Steiner See' is only a few kilometres away.

The geological origins of the Erzberg are not yet clarified and still controversial. Newest theories point out that there is a subsrosion of the volcanic base of the Erzberg through circulating water. Geologically the Erzberg is part of the Greywacke Zone, which is a band between the Northern Limestone Alps and the Central Alps (Schmitzberger 2014). More specific the Erzberg is in the northeast section of the Palaeozoic Greywacke, in contact with the Mesozoic Northern Limestone Alps. Mineral value of the Erzberg is the siderite (FeCO₃), which is varying intensity iron-magnesium carbonate chatted with the ankerite. The siderite metal penetration is mainly based on hydrothermally material displacement reaction between siderite, ankerite and lime in course of the orogenesis. The orebody is embedded as trough shape in the geological layers. Carried out is/are siderite and ankerite adhesions with an iron content of 33% to 36% after the purification process, this makes the Erzberg limited in its competitiveness with other deposits. Worldwide the Erzberg is the biggest known siderite deposit and the largest surface mining in Europe (Abendteuer Erzberg 2014).

Form of the Erzberg

After 1820 the only possible way to do mining at the Erzberg was surface mining by this the Erzberg received its striking pyramidal shape. By 1907 there were 60 tiers each with a height of 12 metres. In 1928 the number of tiers was divided in half each of them named after a patron saint or outstanding miners. At the moment the tiers of the Erzberg are 24 metres high which gives the Erzberg its significant form (Abenteuer Erzberg 2014). The Erzberg with its landmark-character is an art piece itself, a huge man-made sculptural element in the landscape only it hasn't been perceived like this yet.

Müll aus Italien lagert am Erzberg, 13.03.2002, Kurier



Mining Organisation

Today there is mining 24 hours, 7 days a week. The cascaded excavation of the mountain is maintained with on-site produced pumping explosive, drills (drilling performance 50 m/h), wheel loader and transportation vehicles (800 hp up to 120 t carrying capacity). Per explosion about 40.000 to 50.000 t rocks are moved, every year 2,1 t ore are produced. The enormous amounts of material need an optimised spatial arrangement of the mining process. The transportation vehicles bring the containing ore to the so called 'breaker mills' where it gets shredded. Dead rocks are distributed on dumps all over the Erzberg. The finished ore for transportation and smelting is also stored on heaps at the valley next to the freight rail connection. The loading on the web happens through conveyer belts. From today's perspective the economically utilisable ore reserves last circa 25 years. At the moment 220 people are working at the Erzberg (Kerschbaumsteiner 2014. pers. comm., 5 Mai).

Landscape

The landscape description was accomplished with a mapping, literature, maps and aerial images. The usage of the landscape around the mountain consists of a mixture of industrial, agricultural and touristic use. The mountain-valley-mountain topography and the given natural restriction the potential for a change of this landscape area is limited.

The present shape of the Erzberg is dominated by the current mining method, but there are still traces of deep mining eras visible. The traces of the lower open pit mine stand out as mine shafts from the mountain. The continued existence of the mine-shafts are arbitrary, because as soon as it comes to another environment degradation they are degraded as well. Existing forest often testifies of reforested mining waste tips since the original forest cover has been greatly reduced from 1867 (Leitner 1983: p. 130). The mining technology specifies and determines the shape of the mountain. According to the mining method (e.g. glory-hole mining method, mill mining, stepped reduction) the spatial shape of the mountain results. The methodology of degradation was and is characterized by technical possibilities, the respective spatial organization and certain geotechnical safety measures (Ipsen 2006).



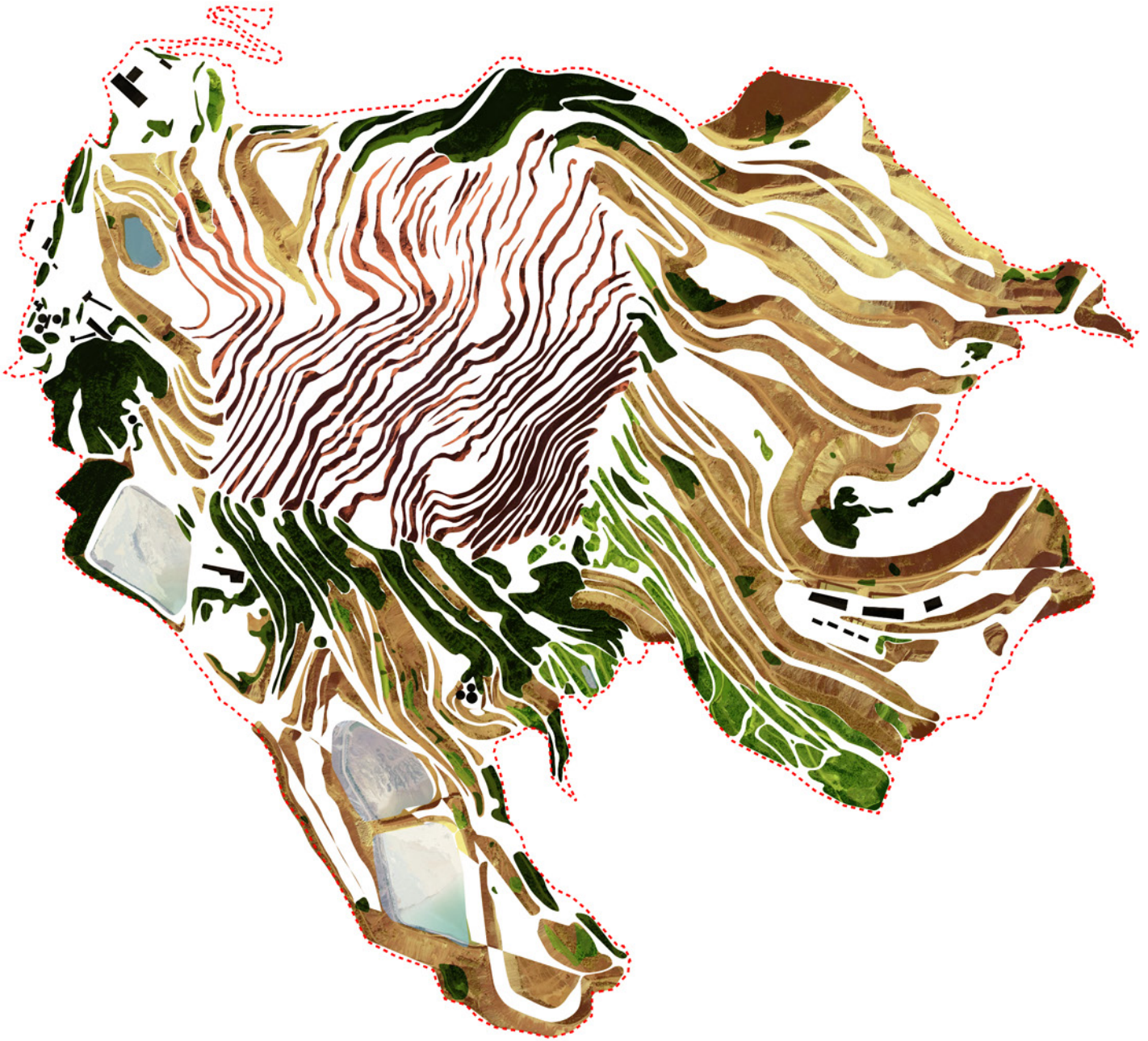
“Möchten sie in einer Geisterstadt leben?”

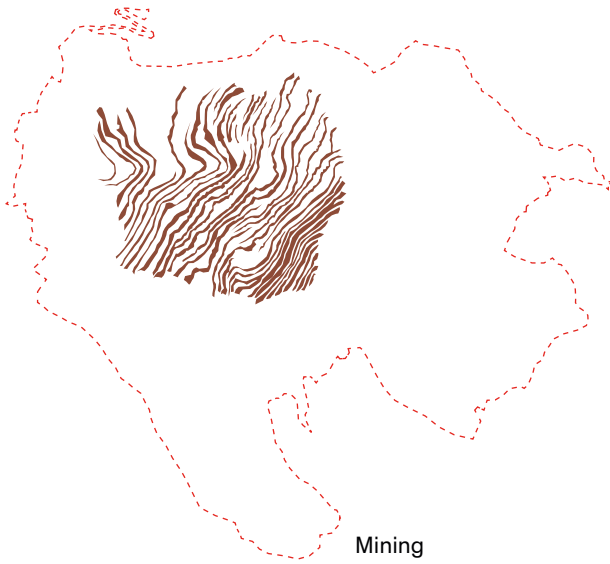
– Dr. Sigrid Günther, Historian

Accessibility

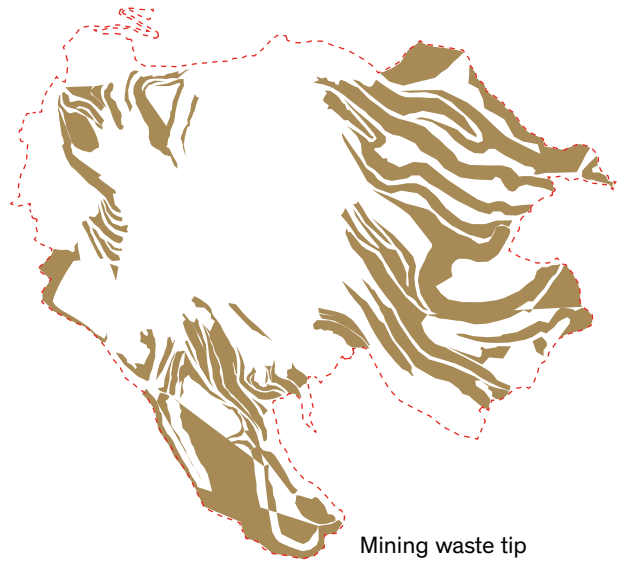
The Erzberg is owned by VA Erzberg GmbH, that means you can only enter the area at certain opening hours. During the opening times the Erzberg is only accessible with a tourist guide or if you have an appointment with an employee. The economic use of the Erzberg makes it impossible for the public to ‘use’ the mountain. The streets at and up to the mountain are mainly for the infrastructure of ore mining. This is actually paradox because there are no barriers, walls or fences apart from the legal restrictions.

Structure

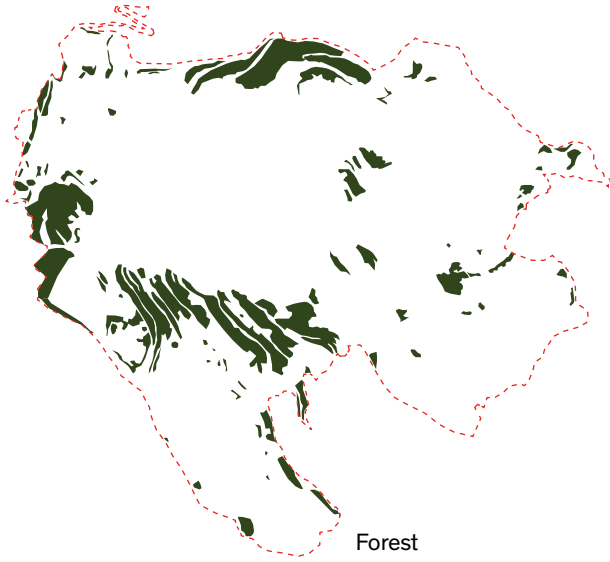




Mining



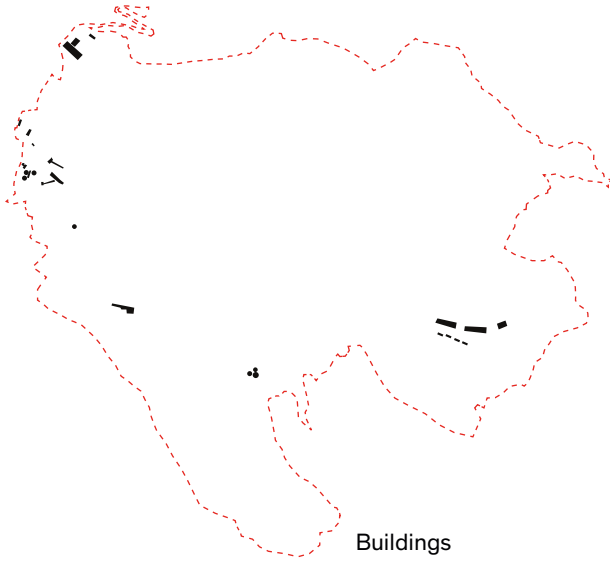
Mining waste tip



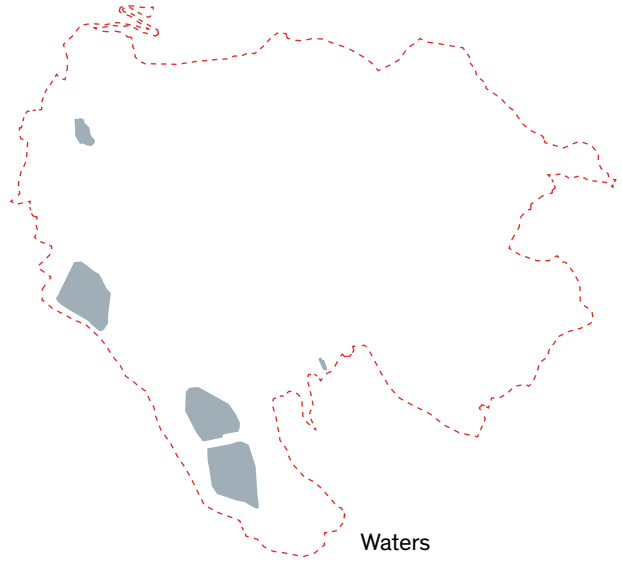
Forest



Tree lawn



Buildings



Waters

Relationship

The relationship between the town of Eisenerz and the mountain Erzberg can be seen as an organism or a symbiosis. The process of the emergence and development of Eisenerz can be seen as parable to the process of mining and smelting from ore from the Erzberg. The town and its identity evolved from the existence of Eisenerz's ore and the extraction of it, ore and the excavation of it are intrinsically tied with the Erzberg. The economic situation of the town and its inhabitants is the economic situation of Erzberg's ore. At times of low machine usage the growth of the town was directly connected to the market demand of Eisenerz's ore. The more ore was needed the more the city grew. At its best times Eisenerz had more than 13.000 inhabitants, several 1000 worked at the Erzberg. Therefore you can assume that the entire economy of Eisenerz worked through the Erzberg. Through increased technologisation and automation in the mining process fewer people were needed for the extraction despite the higher demand of ore from the economy. This and the increasing competition weakness of Erzberg's ore in the global competition led fewer and fewer people work on the mountain and less and less families live in Eisenerz – Eisenerz's economy could not live anymore. With decreasing purchasing power and the onset of migration, the city began to shrink (Moser 1997: p. 197). Their fate was and is the ore. Given the paradoxical characteristics of mining the ore, with the first ore that leaves the hoe you already seal the end of the mining – and the inextricable link between Eisenerz and Erzberg becomes clear. Then it is not surprising that Eisenerz has shrunk, the city reduces itself – the history of Eisenerz is a story of the degradation (Günther, 2014, pers. comm. 14 Mai).



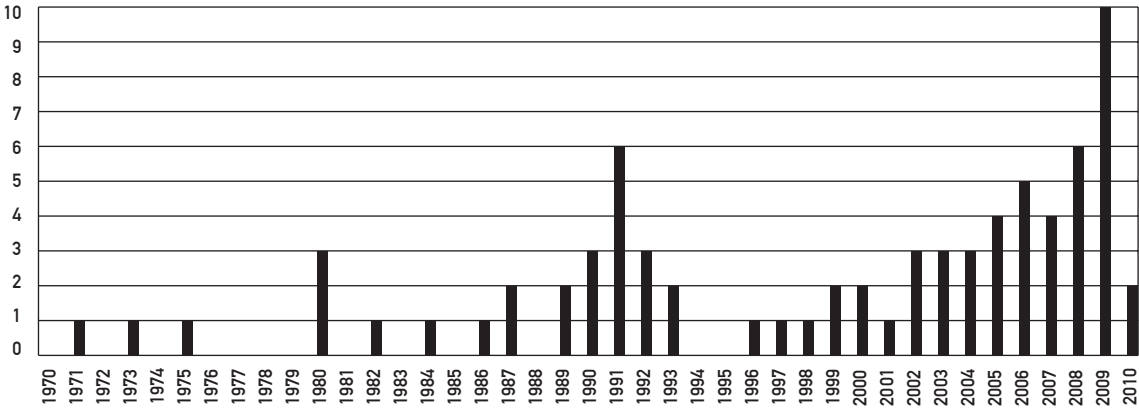
“Wir haben mit ‘Glück auf’ in
der Schule begrüßt.”

– Christine Brunnsteiner



“Abenteuer Erzberg”: Frau veruntreute 520.000 Euro,
26.08.2011, Salzburger Nachrichten

Number of studies



Source: Institut für Stadt- und Baugeschichte, course studio Eisenerz under the direction of Univ.-Prof. Dr. phil. Simone Hain and DI Oliver Jungwirth.



Dimensions

sculptures ~30cm x ~30cm x 13-17cm, the 3 sculptures blend into each other when you look at them from the front

front pedestals 30cm x 30cm x 70cm (color, material vary depending on each sculpture)

scientific view poster 70cm x 100cm (can vary in the end)

inside-view consisting 25 papers each one 22cm x 16cm

media landscape poster 70cm x 100cm (can vary in the end)

Scientific View

The first sculptural part of the triptych represents science in terms of precision, materiality and form – it can be seen as a hybrid between a model and sculpture, for me it is a sculpture. The perspective of the sculpture represents the view you have when you drive into the town Eisenberg.

Materials

The hybrid consists of a mass out of iron powder, sand, red concrete and dead rocks. The 'finished' sculpture oxidizes – iron powder on the surface slowly falls apart from the concrete that supports (stabilizes) the sculpture therefore the entity can never be seen as finished piece, as (like) the process of erosion and oxidation at the Erzberg never stops. The pedestal is made out of a metal/iron construction, the metal/iron pedestal underlines the materiality of the sculpture and the Erzberg.

The Erzberg's essence is the ore, also the ore stands for the 'depth aesthetic' of the man-made sculpture – carved out of ore bearing sediment layers. The model-sculpture is based on materials the Erzberg consists of, to capture the optics and haptics of the mountain. With the materials I decode the 'landscape vocabulary' of the entity Erzberg into its integral parts, the sculpture is an itemization of the semiotic code that is inherent to the Erzberg.

The iron powder stands for the product that is produced in the town and mined at the Erzberg, at the same time the rust effect represents the economic and sociologic degradation of the town. At the beginning the sculpture is grey through the rust it becomes the red/brown tint of the Erzberg. The haptics of the grainy sand reflects the rough materiality of the mountain.

Inside-View

My premise and centrepiece for this sculpture was to make something that could also be seen as a model for a future design (dystopian/utopian as you like) for the landscape Erzberg-Eisenerz. The premise for this design is that it is absolutely not possible to build it – I totally disregarded aspects like money, structural engineering, sustainability, function, reasonability or sense. When you look from the town towards the mountain you have the same view as you have onto the sculpture.

Materials

The right half of the sculpture is made out of concrete which refers to the mentality of the people in Eisenerz – most of them can be seen as 'ERZkonservativ', translated into English the word means a nearly unchangeable position or notion. Most of the citizens of Eisenerz are ERZkonservativ towards a future without the Erzberg in terms of realizing projects that are not directly connected to the Erzberg, also the concrete can be seen as a 'status quo' towards a future perspective where the VA Erzberg GmbH company wants to make a montane-monument out of the Erzberg.

In the middle (it is not the proper centre of the sculpture) the sculpture is cut through with a transparent epoxy resin monolith, which stands for the cut between the inhabitants of Eisenerz and the company VA Erzberg GmbH which occurred during the privatization process from 2000 – 2004 of the Erzberg. The epoxy resin monolith is filled up with water to underline the element water as an unseen economical future perspective for Eisenerz and to highlight the current problem with the contaminated water from the residual waste recycling company 'RMVG' and the VA Erzberg GmbH. The right half of the sculpture is made out of a mixture of soil and epoxy resin. One possible future scenario is a renaturation of the Erzberg. This means a slow succession of the Erzberg but the terraces would still be visible even if the whole Erzberg is fully vegetated – nature reclaims its territory back. I am for a full historical restoration or if necessary a rebuilding of the Erzberg as realistic as possible inspired by the oldest recordings available from the Erzberg. Through the material soil the form of the sculpture is arbitrary abstracted, this epitomizes a re-renatured Erzberg, which is for me an analogy to a perverted future scenario of a near-natural conditions.

The pedestal is white in contrast to the right side of the sculpture work.

**“Das Altersheim fängt bei
der Ortstafel an und hört bei
der Ortstafel wieder auf.”**

– Anton Reinprecht, Pastor



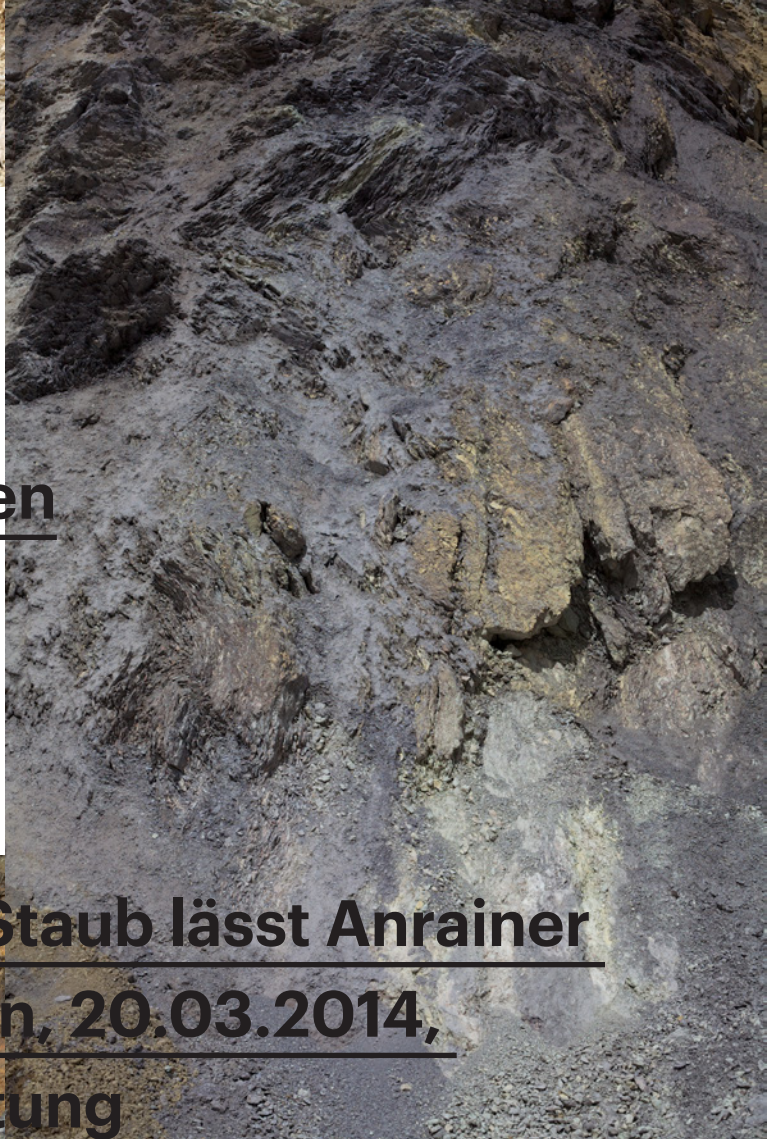
**“Im Gesicht der alten Menschen spiegelt
sich die Stimmung des Ortes wieder.”**

– Sandra Farsbacher, Initiative Erzhoamat



Land der Berge,
zukunftsbleich?, 19.10.2012,
www.derstandard.at

Totenläuten unterm
Erzberg, 05.10.2011,
Salzburger Nachrichten



Eisenerz: Staub lässt Anrainer
verzweifeln, 20.03.2014,
Kleine Zeitung



Media Landscape

The formal language of the mountain as a representation of language itself. A light sculpture reflects the diffused opinions about Eisenerz in the media landscape from 1997 till now, through the huge variations and different articles I read about Eisenerz it became clear to me that it is not possible to reflect or manifestate this in a 'stable' or solid form, therefore I choose light as my main medium.

Materials

As main material I choose plexiglass. To show the ambiguous picture the media draws from EE I made a negative model of the actual topography. For me it was important to make the sculpture as transparent but at the same as opaque as possible therefore a transparent material was the best decision for me. The actual sculpture is not materialized in a solid material as the other 2 sculptures are. I splitted the 3d topography of the mountain up into contour lines like you would do in a normal plan. Each plexiglass plate represents one countour line but only the negative of the contour line is carved out. The plates are stacked up between each plate is a gap and the last plate covers the whole topography. You can see through the whole sculpture but you an actually see nothing. The same thing happened to me when I read all these articles I couldn't understand anything anymore the more I read the more confusing it got.

At the bottom of the pedestal is a LED plate that changes its light in a certain pattern which reflects for me the headlines that come over and over again about 1 theme in the long term. I think nobody is anymore capable of having an objective view on Eisenerz because the media changes the public opinion almost every week. Will there be a future? Is the town dead? What could be done to safe the town? Everything is just blending together and nothing is really said, overall the light sculpture shows a state of an overall ephemeral 'status quo' since 1997.



This diploma was a huge personal excursion between different worlds – science, personal and media. All the talks I had with people changed my personal view extremely of Eisenerz. The different mentalities of the people: former miners, miners, citizens and people who left and came back to Eisenerz to initiate something. There were so many aspects I didn't think before, so many times I realized how unreflected and stubborn I was. The first time I stood at the main square in Eisenerz it felt depressing, morbid and weird.



**“Der Ort müsste sich
restrukturieren und mit der
Zeit gehen.”**

**– DI Josef Pappenreiter,
Manager VA Erzberg GmbH**

- 25 Jahre Stadt Eisenerz, 1948-1973. [Illustr.], 1973. . Stadtgemeinde Eisenerz.
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