

The Bull

“Rudolf Kreuzer’s Mosaic on the RAUCHFUTTER animal feed facility in Hall in Tirol”

Throughout the existence of the Anton Rauch animal feed company, the northern façade of the production facility has been home to the giant mosaic: The Bull by Rudolf Kreuzer. Locals easily recognize The Bull, and for many residents and passersby, The Bull is interwoven with fond childhood memories. Countless Tirolean children, whether on board with their parents or on school field trips, have often been glued to the window of the train whenever they pass through the Tirolean lowlands, always managing to catch a fleeting glimpse of the giant mosaic. On return trips home it often serves as a reminder that one will soon be home. Today, despite the fact that many trains whiz by at fast speeds, one always manages to catch a glimpse of The Bull as the train rumbles along.

The Building

The building itself is a rarity which, in spite of alterations to its original structure, has maintained its unique early 1960’s architectural style. Located in the greater Innsbruck region and situated within the historic “customs free quarter” (Zollfreizone) of Hall in Tirol, the building was originally designed by architects Karl and Charlotte Pfeiler and erected between 1962-64. Soon thereafter additional buildings including silos were added to the East and the West, and the original main building with the mosaic was considerably modified. It is now positioned in the center of the whole complex.

Oriented on an east-west axis, this rectangular steel-framed building is 32 meters long, 14 meters wide and 36 meters high. The entire façade is almost windowless except for the wrap-around windows on the top floor. The flat roof provides the clarity of design typical of the "neo-realism" style found in many industrial buildings of the 1960’s. On the north side of the building the main entrance is located in the protruding administrative

annex. The original logo of RAUCHFUTTER can be found on the south side, with The Bull located on the uppermost sector of the northern façade. As a result, this one-of-a-kind industrial artwork becomes a prime example of a possible marriage of industrial architecture and art.

The Mosaic

The way Rudolf Kreuzer was able to put this monumental mosaic in perspective on the north side of the animal feed building is a testimony to his ability to combine pure art and artisanship. Although the original name “Krafftutterwerk” (Animal Fodder Production Plant) on the building has since been changed into “Futterwerk”, the purpose remains the same: to give the animals health and strength. And this is what the decorated façade is meant to illustrate.

As the former President Anton Rauch said, everything begins with the plans: “From its inception, the design submissions from architect Karl Pfeiler included a scribble on the north side, which could have been interpreted as a signature, logo or artwork unto itself....” The former general manager of the company, William Nadler, an avid art enthusiast and collector, wanted to emphasize the artistic dimension, and eventually it was decided to choose Rudolf Kreuzer's project of a raging bull with bulging muscles. From then on The Bull dominated board meetings, and arguably was more discussed than the technical features of the building. For example, in the original plans the bull's eyes were criticized by company President Peter Rauch as being too soft, caring and friendly, almost “like an actual cow.” And it was only with the omission of the eyes that the desired savagery appeared.

The mosaic dimensions are approximately 9 x 10.5 meters. Represented in an aggressive posture, the bull's powerful body is structured by a multiplicity of colors. The sheer mass of the animal is underlined by the shading below. An accompanying red line stretches from the back crest of the head, down the spine, eventually curling down the

lower abdomen, highlighting the progress of the strength born from the nourishment provided by the animal feed plant.

As reported by President Igo Rauch, the inspiration for this dramatic red line would stem from Rudolf Kreuzer's trip to Kenya. As his airplane took off at dawn, the picturesque African landscape had been illuminated in all imaginable reddish colors. Typical of the early 1960's, the definition of the outer shape is given by a combination of dynamic colors. The colors range from brown, grey, green, blue and violet tones to the aforementioned red. The multiplication of colors was a way to evoke the infinite variety of cattle breeds.

In 1992, a comprehensive restoration of the mosaic was undertaken by the Storch Company of Zirl, and thus the highly regarded Rauch Bull, which has always been held in high esteem by the Rauch Company, has been preserved for many years to come..

The Technique

The mosaic stones (Tesserae) are made of Murano glass and were purchased directly from Venice, Italy. Rectangular shaped, they are approximately 5mm thick with dimensions of 15mm high by 10mm wide. One can easily observe how difficult it must have been to make this monumental mosaic of 9 x 10,5 meters with these small pieces, especially regarding the perspective and proportions when viewed from underneath. Prior to mounting the finished mosaic on the outer wall, Rudolf Kreuzer arranged the tiny glass bits in an inverted position onto pieces of paper before mounting them on plaster. This space-consuming task was completed in one of the vacant halls of the Straub Barracks in Hall. Igo Rauch, at this time project assistant, reports that during the assembly phase a sudden explosion in an adjacent room wrecked a large portion of the mosaic, annihilating the work of almost one year. Still, it wasn't enough to deter Rudolf Kreuzer, who immediately began reconstruction.

The Artist

Rudolf Kreuzer (1928-2010) completed his studies at the Tirolean Glass and Mosaic Art Institute, as well as the renowned Mozarteum in Salzburg. He was a painter, stage designer, mosaic artist, engraver, artist, sculptor and co-author of several books. In 1955 he received the first prize for painting from the City of Innsbruck Artistic Awards. He painted numerous high profile portraits, including Bishop Paul Rusch, as well as chancellor of the University of Innsbruck, Ferdinand Wopfner and poet Anna Maria Achenrainer, both of which can currently be found in the Tirolean Provincial Museum (Ferdinandeum). Between 1959-1960 he developed a triptych for the assembly room of the Tirolean Chamber of Commerce and a mosaic column for the main foyer of the Sparkasse Bank of Innsbruck. In 1962, commissioned by the City of Innsbruck, he made a bronze mask of Daniel Sailer. The famous Bull on the Rauch Futter animal feed plant in Hall was finally completed in 1964.

From his encounter with Albert Schweitzer, his long stay at Lambarene and his many African journeys, were born several portraits of Schweitzer himself and numerous African landscapes which helped earn Kreuzer acclaim at national and international exhibitions. Furthermore, a lengthy stay in a kibbutz in the 1960's led to the Israel-cycle, a collection of 12 lithographs of the desert.

Works by Rudolf Kreuzer are currently owned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the Province of Tirol, the City of Innsbruck, the Tirolean Provincial Museum (Ferdinandeum), the Innsbruck City Archives and Museum, the University of Innsbruck, the RLB Art Bridge, the City of Berlin, the "Israel Museum" in Jerusalem and by many more private collectors in Austria and around the world, including the United States, Belgium and Italy. However, his most iconic piece remains The Bull on the Rauch Futter animal feed factory.