

Museum of Contraception and Abortion (MUVS)

MUVS is the only museum in the world exclusively dedicated to contraception, pregnancy testing and abortion.

History:

The Museum of Contraception and Abortion was founded in 2003 by gynaecologist Christian Fiala: “As a doctor I can only teach a limited number of people about how they can best manage their fertility. As a scientist and lecturer the number of people I can reach is slightly larger. However, only with a museum is it possible to bring knowledge about reliable contraception and medically safe abortion to the whole world,” he says.

The museum was opened in March 2007 by the former Women’s Minister Johanna Dohnal. It is located very close to Vienna’s Westbahnhof station, on the Mariahilfer Gürtel. The museum is funded through a charitable association and individual donations.

Objectives:

The goal is to provide scientifically accurate information about the past, present and future of contraception, pregnancy testing and abortion to every woman and every man. This should enable the “force of fertility“ to be contained: under natural circumstances, a woman has an average of 15 pregnancies in her life. Of the resulting 10 births, seven children would historically have survived. For most people that is too many – for economic, social or other reasons. Limiting the number of children has therefore always been an important issue for every generation and across most cultures.

Structure:

The museum comprises the real exhibition rooms in Vienna and the virtual museum at www.muvs.org.

Exhibits, models, documents, papers and films are displayed for visitors in three exhibition rooms. Explanations and audio guides are available (in German or English), as well as a museum brochure (in German or English). There are also themed information brochures on special topics (in German or English). Only a tiny fraction of the museum’s collection is on display in the exhibition rooms.

The virtual museum can be visited by means of a virtual tour of the museum. It centres on a vast database of the collection and library, that is accessible to all users free of charge. Pictures may be reproduced free of charge provided that their source is attributed.

Inventory:

The collection, archive and library contain approximately 1500 objects, 1000 articles and 1000 books. A number of scientists have entrusted the museum with donations and bequests. The inventory is accessible from the homepage and will also be reviewed in themed brochures and regular free

newsletters (in German and English).

Hermann Knaus Documentation Centre:

The discovery that there are safe and unsafe days in a women's cycle is accredited to the Austrian gynaecologist Hermann Knaus (1892-1970), as well as the Japanese doctor Kyusaku Ogino (1882-1975). The museum maintains a comprehensive archive on Hermann Knaus as part of its mission to preserve Austria's cultural heritage.

Contraception and schools:

Providing information to young people is a key part of the museum's work. For reasons of space and in order to give young visitors enough time to ask questions, no more than four tours are scheduled per day.

Membership and international cooperation:

The museum is a member of the Austrian Museums Association (Museumsbund Österreich) and is represented on the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The museum collaborates closely in exchanging scientific knowledge with medical history collections worldwide and has a partnership with the Dittrick Medical History Center and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio.

Prizes and Awards

In 2009 the museum was awarded the Austrian Museums Seal of Quality.

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