

## **Art Squared**

In May 2015, the Hilti Art Foundation opened a new venue for art lovers in the heart of Vaduz, at the foot of the steep slope crowned by the princely castle. The paintings and sculptures are on display in a multi-storey building that is of interest in its own right. A compelling whole in shape, material and proportion, it is visitor friendly and adds another highlight to the capital city of Liechtenstein.

The Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, which opened its doors in the year 2000, and the new home of the Hilti Art Foundation stand only a few metres apart and share the same entrance, testifying to the close and successful cooperation of the two institutions for roughly 19 years. In 2005 the Hilti Art Foundation presented a much acclaimed special exhibition of exceptional works from the Hilti family's private collection at the Kunstmuseum.

The architects Meinrad Morger and Fortunat Dettli from Basel were commissioned to design the new building. As one of the architects to build the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, along with Heinrich Degelo and Christian Kerez, Meinrad Morger was not new to Liechtenstein. The two structures make a clear statement not as architectural rivals, but rather as a mutually enhancing aesthetic pair. The façade of the Kunstmuseum is black; that of the Foundation white. Both buildings have shiny surfaces of polished concrete and are square in shape, the one horizontally, the other vertically oriented. The bright façade of the new exhibition venue consists largely of white aggregates, specifically gravel from the nearby Rhine and Lasa marble. The latter comes from Vinschgau in South Tirol and is especially hard, durable and weather resistant. Morger describes the appearance of the façade as follows, "The topmost layer of the white concrete was sanded and polished. In this way, its inner life is revealed, like any

other precious stone. The look of the building changes constantly because of its shiny surface.”

The galleries of the Hilti Art Foundation are accessed via the foyer of the Kunstmuseum. Tickets are valid for both institutions. To reach the new building, visitors climb down a curved staircase to the underground floor that houses the first gallery of the Hilti Art Foundation. There, as in all showrooms, the planning for the lighting system was quite challenging but resolved masterfully. In the underground floor the works are seen in a mixture of daylight and artificial light, while the first floor has only artificial lighting, and the upper floor is illuminated with zenithal light.

LED panels, inserted in the ceiling, provide artificial lighting. Numerous, precisely adjustable sources of light ensure even illumination of the rooms and the desired quality of the light. Under the glass roof of the third floor, a combination of Venetian blinds and light diffusing film (with artificial light as needed) ensures soft, non-reflecting light. The self-contained and understated geometry of the spaces, providing an overall area of 410 square metres, is ideal for the presentation of art. Visitors are able to concentrate exclusively on appreciation of the works.

Another architectural experience in the building of the Hilti Art Foundation is the open, multi-storey staircase. Like a ladder to the sky, it is flooded with light from the large windows. The stairs lead steeply up from the underground floor to the plateau of the first floor and from there, just as steeply and fascinating, directly to the plateau of the third floor with its elegant daylight ceiling.

It is thanks to Michael Hilti that the visitor lies at the heart of this ingenious architecture. User-friendliness is the top priority for the president of the Hilti Art Foundation: “A sensation is of no use in itself unless the concept has been designed for the people who want

to visit. A building of this kind must never be an ego trip or a monument to the architect; above all, it must serve its purpose."

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More information: [www.hiltiartfoundation.li](http://www.hiltiartfoundation.li) and [www.kunstmuseum.li](http://www.kunstmuseum.li)

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