

The “Übrige Brocken” Memorial in Huttererpark

These twelve stones invite you to linger, contemplate, read and understand.

They were erected in memory of Tyrol’s persecuted Anabaptists.

This park is a place where we can reflect on how we treat dissenters.

It stands for religious diversity in urban areas.

The City of Innsbruck

An initiative of the Hutterite Working Committee Tyrol & South Tyrol

with the support of
the Region of the Tyrol and the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol,
the Dioceses of Innsbruck and Bozen-Brixen,
the Lutheran Diocese Salzburg and Tyrol
and of the Free Churches in Austria.

Artistic design: Verena Paula Simeoni, Innsbruck

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History

The Hutterites were part of the Anabaptist movement, which emerged during the Reformation in the early 16th century as a reaction to political, ecclesiastical and social grievances. Hutterites practised adult baptism, rejected oaths and military service, withdrew their communities from supervision by regional political authorities and lived in a “community of goods”. In the early modern period they were in this way challenging the core principles of state, church and society, the consequence of which was severe persecution. One escape route for the Hutterites was to emigrate to Moravia, often along the River Inn. In Moravia, artisan Hutterite communities thrived until the early 17th century. In fact, their presence there was tolerated and encouraged by the local nobility. Later they were forced to emigrate to the USA and Canada via Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. Around 50,000 of their descendants are still living there on communally-managed farms.

“Übrige Brocken”

The title of this installation, “Übrige Brocken” (“Remaining Fragments”), is taken from a Hutterite manuscript.

Twelve naturally-formed boulders – arranged in a circle – symbolise the communal living of the Hutterites, past and present. The Bible forms the basis of their communal life. This close interdependence finds expression in the engraved Bible verse. Every stone bears one word. Only together do they form a sentence. These boulders, or glacial erratics, have a long history. They are stones which were carried along with glacial ice during the ice ages. They were shaped by a series of external factors – as were the Hutterites: outside influences over several centuries forced them to keep moving and to adapt until they finally found their present home.

“For they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.” This verse from the Bible (Zechariah 9:16), which is chiselled into the 12 stones, can also be applied to the Tyrolean Anabaptists. Their Christian faith, their pacifism and their commitment to freedom of thought, as well as their strong sense of community, can be seen as a guiding light for the Tyrolean people.

Representing many other persecuted Hutterites, the stones are a reminder of 12 men and women who were detained, tortured, and in some cases killed (+) in the Greater Innsbruck area:

+Michael Kürschner-Klesinger, +Anna Malerin, +Ursula Ochsentreiberin,
+Jakob Huter, Ursula Hellrigl, Georg Libich, Michael Zeller and spouse,
+Hans Mändel, +Eustachius Kotter, +Georg Mair-Rack,
+Niclas Geyrsbühler

Encounter

The Hutterite Working Committee Tyrol & South Tyrol wishes to revisit this dark chapter in the history of the Tyrolean Hutterites in the 16th century and to promote encounters with the Hutterites of today. It is hoped that this will lead to greater understanding, respect and dialogue between Christian denominations and religious communities in Tyrol.

In 2008 the Roman Catholic Bishops of Innsbruck and Bozen-Brixen wrote to the Hutterite elders acknowledging the great injustice suffered by their forefathers which had been carried out in the name of the church. The State Governors of Tyrol and South Tyrol have expressed their profound sadness about what happened and emphasised the importance of learning from history.