



What one connects with a place is time, I always think, and while I often hesitate to say I love a place, I can say that I spent time within it. And that cannot be reversed. When things change, past time is materialized.

Leaving a place for me comes with a notion of fear, the potential to return later to a changed environment that meanwhile became unfamiliar. Leaving involves a notion of escape but also a feeling of neglect. Likewise, leaving and returning to Vienna has been a constant silent undertone to my past years of working and traveling. Adapting to new situations, I often find myself stuck between the capacity to do so and a timid melancholia to stubbornly resist.

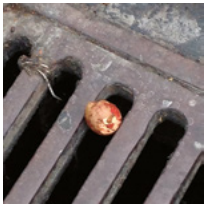
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Back when I moved to my apartment in the 3rd district, the Golden Harp pub was still Café Goldengel—subtitled »Kommunikations Café.« People who moved here later, like my sister, who took my apartment after I left Vienna, don't remember it usually. The »Kommunikations Café« aspect is what had me confused about Café Goldengel. It suspended the place somewhere in between a swingers' club and a fake coffee house. It was somehow off, and also the last thing we were looking for in a coffee house was communication.



Three restaurants make up a conglomerate of 3rd district mostly middle-class living, from Rochus, the restaurant by the market, with its syntaxless menu composed of dishes described by nouns (chicken, salad, basil, balsamico), via Iridion, the overbooked Greek restaurant populated with doped waiters, their pupils as deep as oceans (the only thing anyone ever seems to remember from

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this part of town: »aber den guten Griechen habt ihr!«). Finally too, Goldengel turned into Golden Harp, spatially in bad limbo almost by the canal. For all I remember Goldengel was mostly empty:

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Das Alt-Wiener Kaffeehaus Goldengel Kommunikations-Cafe-Restaurant (ehemalige Cafe Wilhelmshof) auf der Erdbergstrasse (Ecke Wassergasse) mit seiner über 100jährigen Tradition sucht einen neuen Besitzer! Die Atmosphäre dieses Alt-Wiener Kaffeehauses, welches um 1904 seinen Einzug erlebte, kann man in Worte gar nicht fassen denn man muss einfach einmal da gewesen sein. Beim Eingang hängen Zeitungshalter und seine Melange, mit einem warmen Apfelstrudel, genießt man auf der noch immer bestehende Original Einrichtung aus dem Jahre 1904!¹ (2011)

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I never went in.

Golden Harp the pub, however, now is a very well frequented place, corporately designed, one of six branches all over Vienna. My dad likes to get a drink there when my parents visit and my sister gets a beer there sometimes too. Filled with a mixed crowd, it provides the stimuli that a place to get drunk needs.

In der Erdbergstraße haben wir ein märchenhaftes Ambiente im irischen Flair erschaffen. An den Wänden hängen Weltkugeln und alte Geigen sowie viele alte Bücher und Bilder aus vergangenen Zeiten. Die Irish Pubs in Irland sind die guten Stuben der grünen Insel. In ihr sind Gemütlichkeit, Heimeligkeit,

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Vergangenheit und Gegenwart vereint – sie sind das Herz der Menschen, und dort schlägt es auch. Wir hoffen, dass hier ein wenig das Herz der Stadt schlägt und die Menschen uns mit der Liebe begegnen, mit der wir hier für sie und für uns diesen außergewöhnlichen Pub eingerichtet haben.²

Making one's way from the Golden Harp towards Iridion, the attentive visitor will discover the hippopotamus sculpture—*Nilpferd mit Jungem*—by Rudolf Schmidt. It is my favourite public sculpture in Vienna. Yet as an object in relation to its surrounding, much like Cafe Goldengel, it seems misplaced, creating a strange juxtaposition between the prosaic erected-in-the-year-of social-living complex and the sculpture's singular exoticism.

Further, through a strange loggia or pergola one reaches Rochusgasse U-Bahn station via Rochuspark. I was surprised to find it had a name, since it had never occurred to me to be a place—that is, a space defined by limits and features. The tube-shaped area between Iridion along the length of the subway building back to where the pavement leads into a passage to another apartment building is called Rochuspark.

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The dysfunctionality of said tubed area attracted my attention from the beginning. Maybe it is connected to the fact that there are not enough people in the area to actually claim a public space for themselves out of necessity—middle-class living and large apartments with sufficient private space dominate. Several rectangular compartments make up the park: a walled off playground, a small

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area that connects pergola and park, and a large walled seating area filled with sandy gravel, benches lining the walls, and decorative, large tree trunks placed on the sand with the apparent intention to equally serve as benches.

Both, leisure-bench area and the playground are mostly empty. When rain falls, it collects in puddles all over the sand-gravel mix. The ground gets messy, soft and muddy. The only benches occupied are the ones opposite the designed park area, as a hangout for the drunk and lonely. People seem to only ever happen upon this playground, while other ones were configured as distinct places of social interaction and as destinations for walks, a reason for kids to leave the house.

(While editing this text in July 2016, Rochus-park had gone through yet another transformation. The very area with tree trunks had been cleared out, the ground paved and at least two drains had been inserted along the stretch of it. Instead of the tree trunks various equipment for sport and play made of steel had been placed there, among others a ping pong table and various work out stations conspicuously labeled with »ISW« signs—International Street Workout. The area seemed to be in use now, groups of runners were using the tools, coaches were explaining details.)

Iridion has its very own landmark too: a tacky concrete statue depicting Atlas holding the sky as a sphere on his shoulders, about one meter in size. Back when I moved there, it was a symbol of stately confidence, lining one side of the entrance to the restaurant with a discus thrower on the other. One day after a



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storm, I found Atlas had fallen, leaving part of his arm broken and exposing his wire nucleus. The incident infused the statue with pathetic authenticity and I was not too astonished to find Iridion's management had placed him back by the entrance, unrepaired, a relic of its own kind.



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The paved path that separates the park from the subway station building is lined by trees. The park is configured as an attempt to construct a place around an area without a center. The proximity to the subway station building, with its fans and ventilation systems conspicuously relating to dust and dirt, make it unthinkable to spend more than a moment there, to stay longer than waiting. It is just within this non-space that two concrete parabolic reflectors have been installed.

Sourced from a company called Richter Spielgeräte GmbH, which specializes in large outdoor toys and activity tools, the parabolic reflectors directly refer to the dimensions of the area. They signify the parameter of needing thirty meters of distance between each other to function as »communicative toys.« If a person speaks right into the middle of one mirror, a second person, thirty meters away, will hear their voice as if standing right next to them. It is a phenomenon of acoustics that comes close to magic when first experienced. They are mostly used as a canvas for tags and graffiti—like a communication gone awry. The parabolic reflectors came to mean to me something more complex than a well-meant social imperative to »enjoy« a space. Like silent symbols, they waited patiently for us if we needed them. We had a ritual, to use them to fight and to make up.

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When we called the district administration to ask if we could take the parabolic reflectors, dislocate them for a time, that is, to display them at the museum, we did not even have to put up an argument. Within a day we were granted permission and I was left with the unreasonable wish for somebody to have been there to defend them.





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¹
<http://www.mimikama.at/allerlei/cafegoldengelsucht-einen-neuen-besitzer/>

Kommunikations
Cafe-Restaurant
(formerly Cafe Wilhelmshof) on Erdbergstraße (corner of Wassergasse) with its over 100 years of tradition is

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looking for a new owner! One cannot put into words the atmosphere of this old Viennese coffeehouse, which moved there in 1904, because you have to have been there. At the entrance hang newspaper holders, and you can enjoy a Melange coffee with a warm apple strudel while sitting on the original furnishings dating back to 1904. (2011)

²
<http://www.goldenharp1030.at/>

In Erdbergstraße we have created a magical atmosphere with Irish flair. Globes and old violins hang on the walls along with many old books and pictures from bygone times. The Irish Pubs in Ireland are the pubs of the Emerald Isle. In them coziness, homeliness, past and present are united—they are the heart of the people, and this heart beats here too. We hope a part of the heart of the city beats here too and the people treat us with the same love with which we have furnished this extraordinary pub for both you and us. (2016)