

## Cornelia Dietschi Of eyebright, lungwort and flossflower



Photo: Markus Schwander

*Markus Schwander refers with his wall relief, to the mural Medicinal Plants by Niklaus Stöcklin from 1936 in the administrative building (Building 21) of Otto Rudolf Salvisberg at Roche Basel. Despite the reference to tradition, he succeeds in transporting the theme into the present and depicting it in a new light.*

Medicinal plants are shown fragmentarily and partially abstracted in the wall reliefs made of polymer plaster. Individual parts of plants such as flowers, stems, leaves and roots are discernible. In this process, the sculptor had to address various questions which require great craftsmanship, imaginative power, and a precise analysis of the place. In addition, he demonstrates a profound sensitivity for the subtleties of the different surfaces. The individual parts (around 20) were modelled by hand;

a plastically plausible implementation was sought, cast in polymer plaster (around 40 parts) and tested in various combinations. Defining the piece's sizes (usually they are enlargements), their relative sizes and arrangement all play equally decisive roles in the ensemble. For the process of deriving the final form, Markus Schwander chooses various procedures that have occupied him for some time: imprint, three-dimensional collage, cast and enlargements.

Sensual tactility is inherent to three-dimensional, sculptural art. The relief takes leave of the wall and protrudes into the room, seeking contact with viewers in a silent encounter. In regard to the plant parts, held reductively in the same white tone as the wall, a question arises about that which remains unshown: invisible fragments that could be inferred beneath the plaster.

*“A work of art is an invitation to perceive and offers the viewer an experience that otherwise cannot exist—something which belongs exclusively to the medium of the artwork and is only to be found there.”*  
(Jürgen Stöhr)

With his artwork *Of eyebright, lungwort and flossflower*, Markus Schwander facilitates unexpected experiences in two ways. On the one hand in the encounter with the artwork itself; on the other, with a space that he productively reinterprets. The stairwells

of the laboratory building are made perceivable in a new way and evoke a different kind of experience. Different (day)light situations generate continuously new perceptual possibilities. In addition, the artwork's conception of the staircase as a display case refers to the fact that Kaiseraugst is also a place characterized by its being an archaeological site.

Translated by Erin Mallon



Photo: Beat Ernst

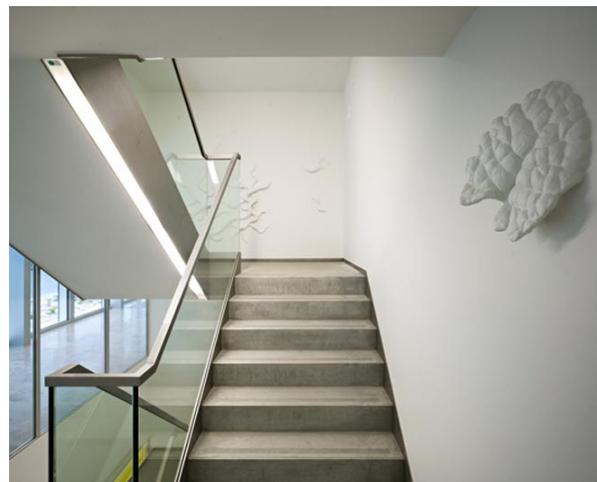


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