

Outside in prison = KREMS (AT) — Having won the competition for art in the built environment at the Krems Penitentiary, Gabu Heindl has redesigned the men's exercise yard; the women's yard will follow shortly. She named her work 'Outside in Prison'. Plays on words are not her only source of enjoyment. The Viennese architect also likes questioning conventional notions, sometimes even twisting them around in her work to mean the opposite. Why, for example, should the men walk around a square paved with asphalt and the women on a green lawn as originally planned? When male inmates are allowed into the yard today, they walk on a lawn. The yard is too dark for real grass so this is artificial turf. But, says the architect, even on good football fields the synthetic is often preferred to the genuine. A standard football ground was impossible here for reasons of size. The white markings delineate a 'bambini-field' four times smaller than normal, and even it has to continue up the wall at one point. In the corner where the sun penetrates for the longest period of time, the lawn becomes a wavy bench where the men can sit or recline.

To keep the men from hurting themselves on the building's rough wall as in the past, it is now lined with bright-orange impact protection padding. And the windows? They are still barred to prevent someone from climbing out a window without permission or maybe to protect the glass from the football – after all, windows around local football fields are barred, too. It is hoped that when the inmates play ball here, they will be able to forget for a while where they are. (ANNE ISOPP)

Art project for Krems Penitentiary, 2010–2011. Architect: Gabu Heindl. Info: www.gabu-wang.at

