

ART ON THE BUILDING

Panton Passage to be preserved for Basel - and rebuilt

For a long time, there was silence about the walk-in artwork at the Unispital parking lot. Now it is clear: the passage will be reconstructed after demolition.

Hannes Nüsseler, 17.10.2023, 3.45 p.m.



The walk-in artwork by Verner Panton is to be retained elsewhere on the hospital grounds.

Picture: Kenneth Nars

The University Hospital Basel gives the all-clear: "The spirit of Verner Panton is not to disappear from the underground of the University Hospital Basel," the USB communications department announced in a media release on Tuesday. What sounds like Halloween in linguistic terms puts the long-awaited finishing touches to the nail-biting over the future of the Panton Passage, which is to be demolished but also resurrected in a new form on the hospital grounds.

Since the existing passage with the artistic colour design of the Danish designer and architect, who died in 1998, will have to make way for the new building of Clinic 2, the original work will be documented in detail before it is dismantled and reconstructed in a reopened entrance from Hebelstrasse to the multi-storey car park, the university hospital writes further. For this purpose, photographs and videos would be produced to precisely determine and record the colour tones.

Reconstruction with added value

An accompanying group, including the architect Pierre de Meuron, the Vitra Design Museum and the cantonal monument preservation office, together with a company for scenography and interior design, had found a way to reconstruct the work in the immediate vicinity. "This will be done in a pedestrian access from Hebelstrasse, which will be reopened," the media release says. The floor design originally envisaged by Verner Panton will also be added there.

The existing corridor with the original work will be accessible until July 2024, the USB says, and the new Panton corridor will be open to visitors from then on. "The costs for reactivating the new corridor will be borne jointly by the Basel University Hospital and Immobilien Basel as the car park operator. The colour scheme can be implemented cost-neutrally due to the omission of the previously planned design." A new access from Petersgraben to the multi-storey car park is then planned in 15 years.



Criticism from various sides has helped. The Panteon passage is being reconstructed.

Picture: Kenneth Nars

"Great joy and pride"

Thus, there is finally clarity about the walk-in artwork in the access tunnel to the multi-storey car park of the University Hospital Basel, which the Dane, who lived in Basel for a time, created in 1978. When the demolition became known last spring, it caused regret and consternation in heritage protection circles and among art lovers: the Vitra Design Museum, which is in close contact with the Panton family, demanded that the passage be preserved, and a petition called for the same.

After the university hospital raised initial hopes and entrusted a working group with the search for "suitable solutions", things remained quiet for months. Only a month and a half ago, in response to repeated enquiries, it was only said that the case of the Panton Passage was "in progress". Carin Panton, the designer's daughter, is highly satisfied with the solution that has now been found. "The fact that my father's artistically important work lives on in a central location in the heart of Basel and, by integrating the floor into the design, corresponds even more to Verner Panton's original design than the previous hospital passage, fills my mother and me with great joy and pride."

(bz, 17.10.2023)

Translated with DeepL