

A masterpiece of interior design is in danger of disappearing!

An extraordinary work of art will fall victim to the demolition and new construction of the Clinic II of the University Hospital if action is not taken at the last moment. It is extraordinary because of its dimensions and its design.

The world-famous architect and designer Verner Panton (1926-1998), who lived in Basel for a time, was commissioned by the canton to artistically design the long connecting corridor from Clinic II to the car park in the cantonal hospital. The intention was to counteract the monotonous and somewhat eerie character of the hundred-metre-long, windowless corridor.

Panton divided his work into eight sequences in the eight spectral colours orange, light red, dark red, aubergine, purple, violet, blue and turquoise. These sequences are interrupted by a few sections in shades of grey, where the eye can rest a little. The painting was done all-over, with no distinction between floor, walls and ceilings. Since its creation, the walk-in artwork has been altered several times, such as in the colour of the floor, by replacing the original lighting and by adding advertising posters. However, the painting is completely preserved and in amazingly good condition.

"Great loss for Basel as an art location".

Panton's "design intervention is one of his last surviving interior designs and an example of his holistic approach to design". This is the conclusion of an art-historical expert opinion on the works of art in the now still existing Clinic II, which was commissioned by the University Hospital. The monument preservation authorities recognised the monumental value of the Panton Passage in 2006, but this has not yet had any effect on the planning of the new building. The passage would be displaced by the construction site for the high-rise displaced. In the reports mentioned, the destruction of the passage is described as a "great loss both for the entire oeuvre of the world-famous designer and for Basel as a location for art and culture".

Appeal by Heimatschutz Basel and baukult

The building permit for the Klinikum II project has not yet been granted. Heimatschutz Basel and baukult - Freiwillige Basler Denkmalpflege - appeal to the Universitätsspital to examine how the Panton Passage could be preserved within the new building project. If this proves impossible, it would have to be comprehensively and properly documented (for example with a video in a 3D documentation). For copyright reasons, this would involve working closely with the heirs of Verner Panton, who suggest thinking about a faithful reproduction of the passage as an art installation.

Support from Rolf Fehlbaum (Vitra)

Rolf Fehlbaum, founder of the Vitra Design Museum, met Verner Panton in the early 1960s and was involved in the development of the Panton Chair, one of the iconic furniture designs of the 20th century.

Fehlbaum comments on the subject as follows: "In the many years of our friendship, I came into contact with all aspects of his work. The most important contribution, apart from his work as a furniture designer, proved to be the most elusive at the same time: the design of rooms in which wall, ceiling, floor, light and furniture were integrated and strongly accentuated in colour. Incomparable spaces were created in flats, exhibitions and restaurants. They all shared the same fate. They were changed after a certain period of time or, in the case of exhibitions, cancelled. The only remaining installation is in Basel. It is the passage that leads from the Basel Parkhaus to Petersgraben. Without Verner Panton's intervention, this tube would be an inhospitable place. Thanks to his intervention, it conveys a visual experience. This testimony to a revolutionary design idea will disappear in the course of the new construction of Klinikum II if the building plans are not adapted with a view to preservation. That would be a loss for Basel and a loss for the design world."

(Heimatschutz Basel, 01. Februar 2022)

Translated with DeepL