

## Innocence

### Ars Electronica Futurelab creates interactive Installation for Linz's PASSAGE Shopping Center

(Linz, May 5, 2010) At the invitation of PASSAGE CEO Werner Prödl, the Ars Electronica Futurelab has created an interactive installation custom tailored to The PASSAGE. "Innocence" is the title of a work that has to do with Linzers' childhood memories of The PASSAGE.

### The PASSAGE - More than just a place to shop

The PASSAGE has been a Linz landmark institution for nearly half a century. When it opened on September 26, 1963, it was the first shopping center in Upper Austria with its own parking garage. The escalators alone created a sensation! A place full of people, toys, colorful lights and switched-on TV sets, this retail paradise was especially attractive to Linz's children. The PASSAGE was the quintessence of fairy-tale beauty and incredible fascination for some (especially young) people; for others, it embodied modern consumer culture. Thus, it has always been much more than the sum of its individual stores. Accordingly, it has left its mark on Upper Austrians' collective memory. Today, The PASSAGE remains a core element of the downtown cityscape. Hide Ogawa of Ars Electronica Futurelab's Researchgroup puts it in these terms: "It's because The PASSAGE is far more than just a shopping center. People arrange to meet "at The PASSAGE"; this is where you get together with your friends, have a bite or go out for drinks. The PASSAGE is a social and geographic hub right in the heart of Linz." The special ambience that constantly pervades this space and the memories Linzers associate with it were the sources of inspiration for "Innocence," the interactive installation created by the Ars Electronica Futurelab.

### Innocence / Ars Electronica Futurelab

The site of the installation is the area in front of the elevators on the Ground Floor. All visitors passing through this space on their way to and from the elevators, the information desk or the parking garage are captured by two cameras, and their images are displayed in real time on a 2½-m2 monitor set up in front of the bank of elevators. Pedestrians walking towards the monitor see themselves "approaching themselves, as it were," and find themselves transported into a fairy-tale world. Framed by branches and leaves, the shopping center's passageway now appears as a forest clearing. Here and there, deer peek out of the thicket; hesitant at first, they venture out into the open. Pedestrians cause fallen leaves to swirl up from the forest floor—more or less, depending on how fast they're walking through the clearing—and this either frightens the animals away or entices them to come closer. All of a sudden, it starts to rain. What begins as a light sprinkle suddenly becomes a cloudburst and turns the clearing into one big puddle. The deer have vanished, replaced by swans and ducks splashing about in the water. Each step by a pedestrian now triggers waves that spread out in concentric circles across the Ground Floor of the shopping center. Just as suddenly as it began to rain, the sky clears again. The water dries up and the clearing reappears. "This is a cyclical sequence that alludes to the transformation The Passage has undergone over the

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years and, thereby, to the experiences and recollections of the generations who have grown up in Linz and been affected by this process in ever-changing ways," says Hide Ogawa.

### The PASSAGE - Facts & Figures

Following 18 months of construction, The PASSAGE opened on September 26, 1963. At that point, it made 8,600 m<sup>2</sup> of retail space available. Only three years later in 1966, the shopping center was enlarged to 10,054 m<sup>2</sup>. In 1979, a separate parking deck with 500 parking spaces was added. That year also marked the premiere of Long Shopping Saturdays (permitting stores to stay open past Noon). In 2000, The PASSAGE was expanded again, this time to 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> of retail space. Today, about 450 men and women work in The PASSAGE. This shopping center is visited by approximately 500,000 people a month.

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