

# M-Preis Supermarket Wennis, Austria

Rainer Köberl, Astrid Tschapeller

The initially most striking aspect of the Wennis M-Preis complex in Pitztal is its location, next to the road on a clear slope facing the valley at the entrance to the community. Thanks to this location, it was possible to accommodate half the car park beneath the 'hovering' volume of the hall. At street level the hall is docked by a footbridge-like approach and creates an element of calm in the form of a rectangle following the road. This is emphasised by the lower, precisely delineated, terrace-like car park. The entrance zone faces the village, and from this point a broad ramp leads to the car park terrace while a narrow ramp for deliveries leads to the sales floor. The most significant spatial and structural design decision was to make the hall in the shape of a 'trough' or U-profile with the floor and walls forming a monolithic unit and the delicate sheet-metal roof stretched across. This means that the hall is accompanied along its length by views of the road and the valley itself, leaving large display windows on the end walls. The end window facing the village resembles an imaginary monitor in that it displays the functions to a greater degree [including the prominently situated café] at the approach end.

Just as the hall volume exercises a stabilising influence on the Alpine topography and landscape, the interior space is anchored in the natural setting by the permanent view of the surrounding panorama.

The arrangement of the goods is relaxed, clear and spatially accentuated, making each area in the hall clearly identifiable. Orientation is optimal, in other words nobody will be exposed to an attack of claustrophobia due to the vast array of goods on show. The black resin floor with a gentle sheen from aluminium splinters requires particular hygienic measures as it is highly susceptible to dust; the dark red wall elements [concrete shuttering of beech plywood] generate a sense both of warmth and of grandeur. The silverfish ceiling of galvanised trapezoid metal sheeting makes the rather low roof appear somewhat higher than it is.

The 'cloud windows' inserted into the monolithic walls signal both freedom and a random element and have clearly been more carefully positioned than might appear at first sight.

All in all, the Wennis M-Preis is not only an interesting new type of supermarket but also a corporate presence of high architectural quality. Furthermore, it constitutes a cultural bonus for the community as an architectural achievement that improves the appearance of the place and, as an added bonus, provides an encounter with urban flair that is already enhancing the quality of life and identity of the village.

## Credits

Client: M-Preis Lebensmittelhandels GesmbH  
Construction companies: Thurner Bau Imst,  
Schlosserei Starck, Laas Leichtdach

Structural engineer: Alfred Brunsteiner  
Project manager: Klaus Schmücking  
Text: Friedrich Achleitner

1992 Office of Rainer Köberl established in Innsbruck, Austria

## Rainer Köberl

1956 Born in Innsbruck  
1984 Diploma in architecture, Technische Fakultät, Universität Innsbruck (UIBK)  
1998-2001 Professor, Akademie für Design, Bolzano, Italy  
2002 Austrian contribution to the 8th Venice Biennial

## Astrid Tschapeller

1963 Born in Lienz, Austria  
1997 Diploma in architecture, UIBK

## Prizes and distinctions

1997 Austria's Best Furniture: STL Chair  
1999 ZV Austrian Clients' Prize: Haus Nofels nursing home and elderly residence, Feldkirch, Austria  
1999 Tyrolean Clients' Prize: House Bramböck, Volldöpp, Austria  
2000 South Tyrolean Prize for Art and Architecture: Forum-Halotech light factory, Bolzano  
2001 ZV Austrian Clients' Prize: M-Preis Supermarket  
2002 Tyrolean Award [contemporary building]: M-Preis Supermarket

## Major works

1994 DDWAS transition place for homeless and unemployed, Innsbruck  
1996 Haus Nofels nursing home and elderly residence  
1999 Chillout temporary hostel for homeless youths, Innsbruck  
1999 Forum-Halotech light factory



