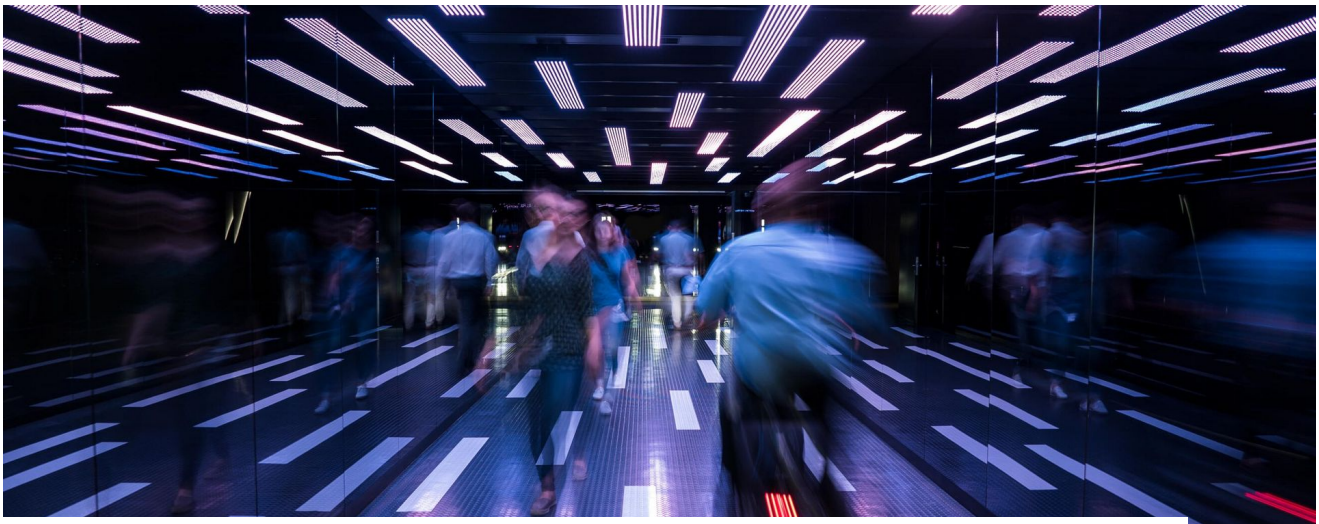

ATHANASSIOS KALIUDIS

Art in your lunch break

The high-technology company TRUMPF places a big emphasis on creating an attractive working environment, and art and culture are a ubiquitous sight on its campus. We tagged along to find out more about the "Art Break" cultural events held at TRUMPF in Ditzingen.

It's shortly after eleven thirty in the morning at TRUMPF in Ditzingen, and the first employees are already heading off for lunch. A good two dozen people have gathered in the lobby of the sales and service center. After grabbing an audio guide, they start waving their arms around in front of the big new screen in front of them. The screen mirrors their movements while emitting a series of metallic sounds. What they are looking at is a flip-disc display system, a futuristic looking installation attached to the wall and equipped with tiny metal discs. Using electromagnets, it converts people's physical movements into digital sequences in real time. There's no doubt that it's an eye-catching feature!

Daniel Schweiger – the only person in the group with a microphone – does a quick final sound check to make sure everything is ready. It's 11:45 am. The participants put on their audio guides and turn up the volume. "Hi everyone, and welcome to the TRUMPF Art Break!" says Schweiger, welcoming the group.

A change of perspective to inspire creativity

Four times a year, TRUMPF creates a different kind of lunch break for its employees in Ditzingen with a series of events known as "Art Breaks". "Our goal is to shift people's perspective during their lunch break, raising their awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the artworks we have in our company and stimulating our employees' own sense of inventiveness and creativity," says Alisa Pilipovic, who is responsible for planning and running the Art Breaks as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility team. The organizers interpret the term artwork in a broad sense, encompassing not only the visual arts, sculpture and architecture, but also films, landscape gardening, and even cutting-edge lobby designs!

Daniel Schweiger stands in front of the so-called Flip-Dot-Wall and explains to the participants of the art break how it works.

A good two dozen colleagues gathered in the lobby of the sales and service center to find out about the new Welcome Passage.

The Flip-Dot-Wall uses electromagnets to transform individual body movements into digital sequences in real time.

The words in the TRUMPF own tunnel system has been handcrafted exclusively for the company. Electrodes excite the gas in the tubes that form the words, making it light up.

Daniel Schweiger is an architect at TRUMPF. Together with Joachim Silber, the head of brand and marketing communication, and the agency Schmidhuber, he helped bring about the latest work of art to grace the campus in Ditzingen – the "Welcome Passage" for customers and partners. As well as the flip-disc display on the wall, this also encompasses the words "Good to have you here" which greet visitors on their way between the lobby and the machine demonstration center in TRUMPF's specially designed tunnel system. "That neon writing is a real work of art, it was hand-made exclusively for us," says Schweiger enthusiastically. Electrodes excite the gas in the tubes that form the words, making it light up.

As you continue down the passage, you notice the LED ceiling lights that can be tailored to special occasions. "If we had visitors from the Netherlands, for example, then we could bathe the whole tunnel in orange light," says Schweiger.

Experiencing art – whatever the weather

Luzia Moll, who works in the marketing department in the Machine Tool division, explains that these Art Breaks are more than just a cultural event. "I was really keen to find out why the Welcome Passage contained all these slightly odd elements and what they were for – after all, I walk through here almost every day!" So what does she like most about how the Arts Breaks are organized? "Well, particularly when it comes to paintings, I like finding out why they were chosen, what connection they have to TRUMPF, and what criteria they applied when they chose where to hang them on the campus," says Moll.

Art Break

TRUMPF has been running the Art Break events in Ditzingen since 2013. The format is based on a similar initiative run at the Stuttgart Art Museum. Anyone who works at the Ditzingen site is eligible to sign up. Four events with eight appointments are held every year, and each tour lasts 30 minutes.

The location of some of the artworks can sometimes pose a challenge, because the event always takes place in the exact spot

where the work is installed. “We feel it’s very important for the participants to experience the artworks in their actual everyday locations,” says Alisa Pilipovic. On some occasions that might be the warm and spacious lobby that houses the flip-disc display, but on other occasions it might be the narrow passageway between the cloakroom and the elevator, or a green space outside the building in a bracing wind.

Laura Kremer, who works in market research in the Additive Manufacturing department, says she is primarily interested in getting a glimpse behind the scenes: “I love finding out about the artists who created the artworks, learning more about their work and their origins.”

Rounded off with a packed lunch

At the end of his presentation, Daniel Schweiger takes up position next to the elevator and the stairway from the tunnel to the machine demonstration center – the final section of the new Welcome Passage – and answers any remaining questions the participants might have. It’s almost exactly quarter past twelve. “Interacting with the artists helps give us a better understanding of the artworks we see at work on a daily basis,” says Laura Kremer on the way back to the flip-disc display, which marks the tour’s start and finish point.

Alisa Pilipovic collects up the audio guides and sets them out ready for the next tour. Each Art Break has around 50 participants, who are divided up into two groups. “There’s a real demand for art and culture among the people who work here, and the events we run get booked up very quickly,” enthuses Pilipovic, who is now busy handing out packed lunches to the members of the first group. These simple bagged meals are a nice touch that is included on each Art Break.

Meanwhile, the first members of the second group are already waving their arms around in front of the flip-disc display. Daniel Schweiger runs his second sound check to make sure everything’s ready. It’s 12:30, and the second tour will begin in just a few moments.

ATHANASSIOS KALIUDIS