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A Factory Funi Ernst B. Leutwiler



In 1924 Worbla Nitrozellulose opened a new factory, built in concrete in the current then architectural style, in Pulverstrasse at Ittigen, now a suburb of Bern. The Nitro Cellulose (gun cotton) produced here was used in many chemical processes, as well as its potential use in explosives. Inside this now historic factory the company installed its own 47m long funicular that used a single open cabin to rise some 20m through the building. Processing at the factory was abandoned in 1971 when it became a storage facility. It was placed on the list of historic structures in Canton Bern and subsequently restored in 1990 opening as the Stufenbau. This is now an Event Venue occupied by around a dozen small companies and at its centre the restored funicular still serves the premises. The organisations in the building support its function of providing space for conferences, trade shows, company events, product launches, etc. The funicular starts on the ground floor, where goods can easily be transferred from road vehicles to the open cabin, and runs up to the 5th floor with seven possible intermediate stops. This allows the range of equipment needed for the multitude of different events to be easily moved around. The cabin and the motor located on the ground floor, date from the 1990 reconstruction, whilst other equipment such as the toothed rack used for braking, and the wheeled counter ballast that runs on its own track under the rails for the cabin, are original. This unique private funicular is one of the shortest in Switzerland. It is user-operated, well



maintained (complete with plants decorating the cabin!) and is still in intensive daily use. 🇨🇭