

THE REMIX

NEW YORK TIMES
HERALD TRIBUNE
STYLE MAGAZINE

APR 4, 09

Supermarket Sweep

SHOPPING FOR FRESH DESIGN.



More Serpentine Gallery than Safeway, the supermarket chain Mpreis is the unlikely patron of some of Austria's best architecture. Founded in 1920 in Innsbruck, the family-owned company started taking architecture seriously in the early 1980s. Now most of the chain's 156 locations are light-filled pavilions that are made out of such gourmet materials as structural glass, perforated steel, poured concrete and raw birch timbers. The chain is based in the Tyrolean Alps, and the most striking stores take full advantage of the dramatic mountain backdrops. Every Mpreis is different — no cookie-cutter here — designed by architects who range from international stars like Dominique Perrault to regional talents like Peter Lorenz. No wonder Mpreis was selected in 2004 to represent Austria for the architecture Biennale di Venezia. A new store is scheduled to open this summer in Wildschönau-Oberau, a secluded village with good skiing. There, Helmut Seelos of Seelos Architekten will turn a 40-year-old stucco market into a sleek wood-shingled box, the 21st collaboration between Mpreis and the architect. "Those clients who care about architecture are the ones we like," Seelos said. "We like Mpreis." OLIVER SCHWANER-ALBRIGHT