

## The Secret Excavation

Andreea Ion CojoCaru | Germany

The Secret Excavation is a location-based augmented reality game that we (Numena GmbH) have developed for the Franziskaner Museum in Villingen, Germany. The truth of history cannot be recovered, especially in the case of cultures that left no writing behind, and the artifacts that survived long enough to reach us, often look at us from behind the glass in silence. In the case of the Magdalenenberg room, an area inside the museum that houses a Celtic tomb from 616 BC, only remnants of wood and small dark objects have remained to speak to the visitor about an extraordinary prehistoric community. This community has built the largest tumulus in central Europe. In developing this project, we turned to characters, interactive dialog, philosophical musings, puzzles, and alleged crimes to help the objects on display amplify their story. Secrets that span two and a half millennia are alluded to using simplified versions of actual archaeological methods that encourage the visitor to experience the joy of discovery. The storyline and gameplay combine both elements of scientific fact and fantasy. These two strands are made clear to the player, and the reconciliation of fact with fiction is ultimately in their hands. Having a storyline that is open to interpretation means they will be discussing their perspective with others which will help tie the semantic information back into episodic memory so it is easier to recall. Overwhelmingly positive reviews left in the room's visitor's book indicate that we have succeeded in providing a radically different way of engaging with the story of Magdalenenberg. The Secret Excavation was selected in the Top Five Best Games in a Museum at the Digamus Awards.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1hBPXIA\\_do](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1hBPXIA_do)