

Grünkreuz
(Green-Cross)



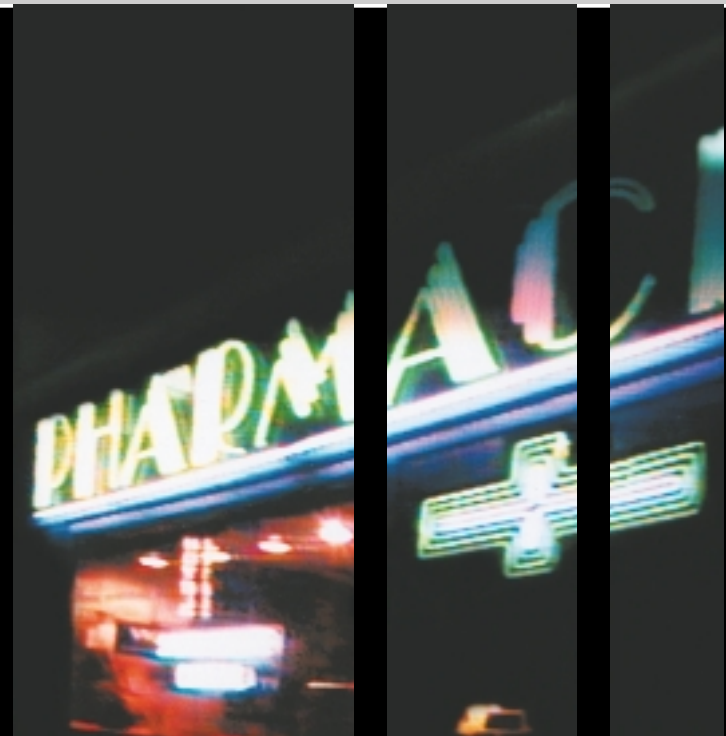
During World War I the green cross was used to mark a special chemical weapon: the explosion of this weapon unleashed a mixture of chloric gas and phosgene, which cauterized the lungs of the opponent. Because of the mark with the green cross this grenade was called "Grünkreuz" and meant a cruel death¹.

Ninety years ago the green cross was a symbol for an aggressive, murderous act (risk of cruel death), today it symbolizes prevention and help for illness and pain (safety for live): in the southwestern part of Europe it is an sign for pharmacies.

It turns out that this pregnant sign is staged. The green crosses made of neon tubes shall carry through in the

urban crowd to attract attention for the pharmacists offers. At the front and in the shop windows green neon-light-crosses are shining and flashing in a big variety. A style of staging has arise, which you can see in the cities and also in the countryside, where no advertisement competes for your attention.

¹ *At this time colored crosses signified other chemical weapons: The so called "Weißkreuz" (White-Cross) attacked the eyes, "Blaukreuz" (Blue-Cross) attacked the nose and throat, "Gelbkreuz" (Yellow-Cross) attacked the skin. The euphemistic term "Buntschießen" (Color-Shooting) stood for the cruel and deadly combination of all these weapons together.*



The concept - displaceness of "Grünkreuz"

On your daily shopping-tour one will notice these illuminated advertising, but will pay no attention to it. One concentrates on other things – people on the street, interesting shop windows and so on. The passer-by in the cities is trained in selective perception.

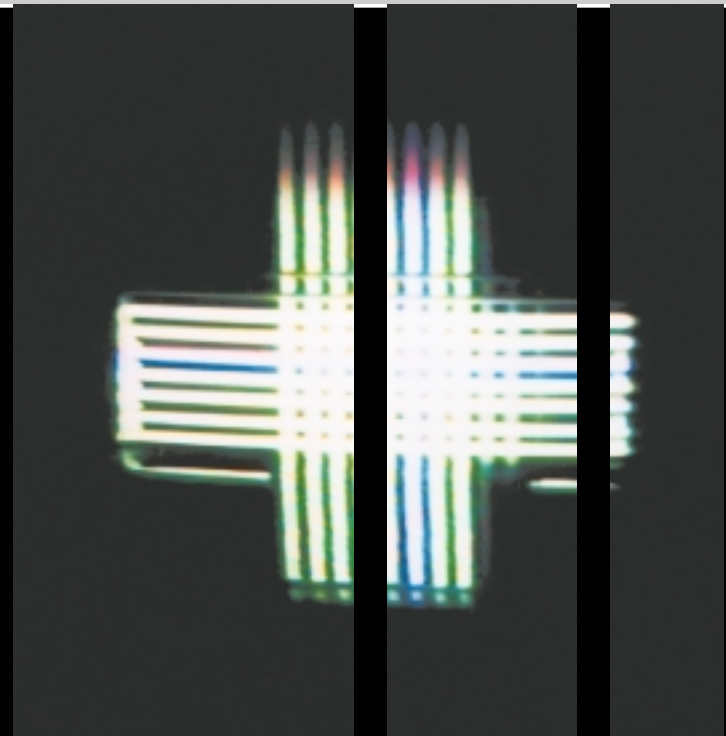
If you are looking for a pharmacy, the green cross shows you the way. At the moment when you see the shining green, the design and the arrangement of the green cross is subordinated. The only interest is to enter the pharmacy shop. The cross is only attend as a direction sign.

The first time I saw the green crosses, I was impressed by their variety, by their designs and by the way they were shining and flashing. To me, it was poetry. Every single cross wanted to be noticed, bit daily live devours them.



In Paris 1999 I started to film these crosses at night for documentation. Back to Cologne I considered what to do with the material. I had the opportunity to present my crosses in a shop window of an orthopaedic shoemaker at Christmastime. Like a string of lights I cut sequences together and projected them onto a silver screen. In isolation – outside their context – and with the blow-up the crosses became characters; by their design, the way they were flashing and shining. This visual (advertising-)element was displaced of its everyday life and a new aesthetic perception was possible. The viewers were amazed and they told me, that they had seen the green crosses at their journeys, but they didn't realize, how different these signs are!

In my opinion "Grünkreuz" will make a change in the viewers mind and next time he will attend to the variety of the green cross.



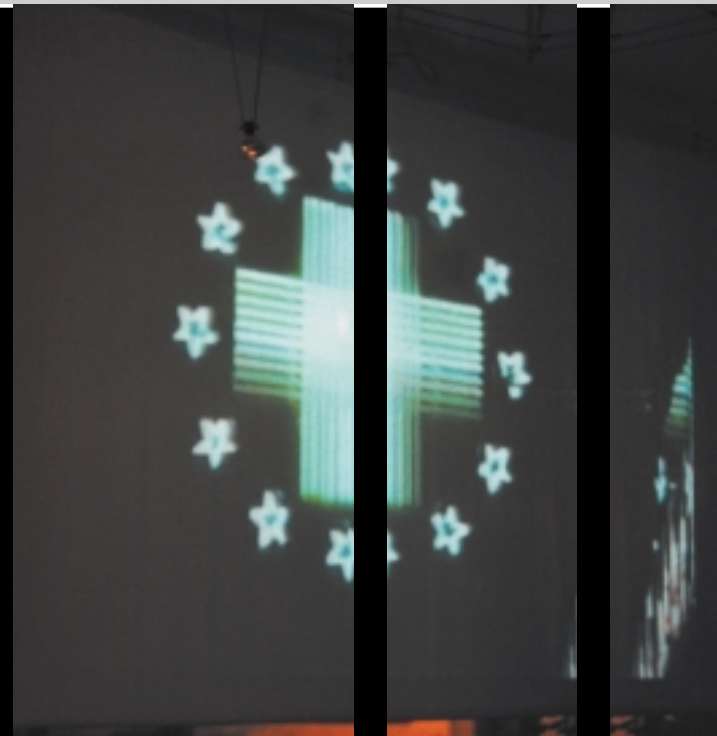
I realized, that music underlines the effect and character of "Grünkreuz" very well. The shining, flashing and flickering of the crosses seem to be a rhythmic principle of pop(-music). Especially electronic music harmonizes with "Grünkreuz" and underlines their dramaturgy.

At the first presentation I played music to "Grünkreuz" and so I did on other performances, and I made the following experiences:

There are parts in which the crosses are flashing to the beat of the music, like they were synchronized. There are also moments in which film and music are dividing (for example when the music is changing or the motive of the crosses switches) and coming back to interaction later on. This is the

risk, the viewer tries to deal with: that the sound and the image are dividing. He is balancing permanently the music-beats and rhythms to the flashing and flickering of the crosses. At this point you reach an higher concentration of what you see and hear.

It is similar to a Video-Jockey-Performance. But there you often find nice pictures to feel good while listening the music. "Grünkreuz" deals with a break of the audio-visual presentation, to demand the viewer for absorbing the music and the pictures.



"Grünkreuz" is a concept where a signal of daily life is displaced to get space for the viewers connotation. The connotation depends on the staging of the sign itself and its presentation:

- The design
- The flashing neon tubes, which are linked to advertisement and consumption. So these crosses can be associate to the world of Las Vegas (attention and excitement).
- The way how the crosses are lighting and flashing seem to be a visualized manner of music, because there is an harmony while listening to the music.

The name "Grünkreuz" is an innuendo, that a sign bases on its context (sign for risk or safety) and so it is variable. The

concept deals with this statement: to create a new context of the green cross and get a new perception, a new connotation of them.

Presentations of "Grünkreuz"

- December 1999: "Grünkreuze"
At a shop window of an orthopaedic shoemaker
- Juli 2000: "Klinik Köln" (clinic of cologne)
Evening at the old a-music shop (<http://www.a-musik.com>)
Waltraud Blischke & Peggy Förster played music to "Grünkreuz"
- May 2003: International Short Film Festival Oberhausen
Music lounge with Peggy Förster and "Grünkreuz"

