

St. Pauli's shining center

Stainless steel spiral meshes clad mobile event stages at the Spielbudenplatz

As a red-light district and the "birthplace" of the Beatles, St. Pauli and Hamburg's Reeperbahn enjoy worldwide cult status. Tourists from all over the world, but also the inhabitants of Hamburg themselves, are spellbound by the attractions of this throbbing district with its unique blend of red-light milieu, alternative and traditional cultural venues, modern living and working. For more than twenty years, the Spielbudenplatz, the actual heart of this melting pot, lay derelict. After the demolition of the glass pavilion built there in the 60s, this square for recreation and amusement originally built at the end of the 18th century became an urban eyesore. As a core element in the identity of the whole district, the question of how it should be renovated became the subject of years of controversial discussion. In December 2004, the Berlin landscape architects Lützwow 7 and the Hamburg architects Spengler Wiescholek were awarded the contract for the collaborative proposal they had submitted in an internationally publicized competition for the realization of a new Spielbudenplatz. The senate of Hamburg with its 1.7 million inhabitants decided to fund the realization of the 9.7 million Euro project from the special investment program Hamburg 2010. Of the total costs, 5.9 million Euro were allocated for the Spielbudenplatz; 3.8 million Euro for the Reeperbahn.

New face to the urban experience

As a multifunctional event venue, the Spielbudenplatz embodies the transformation of the district into a stage and gives a new face to the urban experience. With strict geometric forms and completely clad in spiral mesh

woven of stainless steel, two mobile stages – playhouses of the modern – face each other from the ends of the 300 meter long square. Mounted on rails, they can be moved as required to any position on the square, and can even be brought together to create a single, closed object. Thanks to this versatility, they can serve as a platform with variable size and spatial quality for a wide spectrum of cultural events. At the same time, in spite of their mobility, they are permanently installed landmarks of the square.

Metallic shimmering brackets

210 meter long rails connect the two stages, each one 16 meters long, 16 meters wide and ten meters high. Each of the 55 ton steel constructions is moved at walking pace by its own set of four diesel engines. Into the fields of the angular, bracket-shaped steel frame construction with a grid dimension of 0,50 meters, glass panes were set with LED fields mounted behind them. Seven centimeters in front of the glass, the stainless steel spiral mesh type Escale was stretched as an optically seamless cladding of the side walls, the back wall of the stage, the ceiling and the base. 1,250 square meters of Escale 7x1 and Escale 8x2 thus form a conspicuous, shimmering outer skin.

Robust light-conducting membrane

The choice of spiral mesh made by GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG, the leading manufacturer internationally of wire meshes, was made on the basis of highly demanding aesthetic and functional specifications. The extraordinary high-tech grace of the material was certainly the initial reason for its use. The transparency and reflectivity of the textile-like structure turns the outer skin of the stage into a light-conducting membrane that – whether in daylight or under LED light effects – dissolves and emotionalizes the static construction of the stage walls. Its robust resistance to vandalism, reliable

protection of the glass façade, easy maintenance, long service life and recyclability were the decisive functional properties of the material.

Invisible doors

The stages presented the metal weavers with several exceptional challenges. To avoid the typical zigzag line normally produced in lateral finishing, the individual mesh panels were produced using the so-called "palm-fir-principle" with alternating upwards and downwards running jags. The abstract palm and fir shapes allow the neighboring panels to be interlocked with seams that are less obvious to the eye. Massive cables for the power supply to the mobile stages had to be attached from outside through the mesh cladding. For the entrances to the backstage area for the performing artists, the task was to fit invisible, seamless doors made of Escale mesh. For the installation technicians, the overhead attachment of the ceiling elements, each measuring twelve meters long, four meters wide and weighing 430 kilograms, was a Herculean task. The sagging caused by the intrinsic weight of the mesh panels produced so much tension in the mesh that enormous effort was needed to accomplish the subsequent alignment of displaced spirals.

To underline the puristic form of the stages, the specifications required the edges of the structures to be rendered as sharp to the eye as possible. Eyebolts or tension springs would have disrupted this optical effect. Flat profiles were instead inserted into the mesh bolted in structural brackets behind the mesh, providing a technically and optically elegant solution to the problem. The mesh panels were restrained at the intermediate positions by inserted flat profiles bolted to the structure. The 2,560 LED pixel dots installed behind the milky glazing are used at night for dynamic lighting designs which dissolve the constructional unity of the stages and set an



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atmospheric counterpoint to the commercial neon signs in the vicinity. The bands of the stainless steel spirals boost the impact of this illumination through subtle reflective and refractive effects.

Medialized stage sculptures

In just sixteen months from the first project consultancy to their official inauguration in June 2006, two medialized, mobile stage sculptures were created which reflect a change of paradigm in the consciousness of urban planners and designers.

With new design values like transparency, openness and modularity, Hamburg is following the trend of transforming handed-down urban structures with articulated individuality. The Spielbudenplatz in its revamped form thus reflects social processes and represents an interface of designed space with the surrounding world. As a result of this reflection on the identity-forming role of urban planning, St. Pauli has been given a shining center, and Hamburg a new calling card.

GKD – WORLD WIDE WEAVE

As a privately owned technical weaver, GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG is the world market leader in metal, synthetic and spiral mesh solutions. Four independent business divisions bundle their expertise under one roof: Industrial Mesh (woven metal mesh and filter solutions), Process Belts (belts made of mesh and spirals), Architectural meshes (façades, safety and interior design made of metal fabrics) and Mediamesh® (Transparent media façades). With its headquarter in Germany and five other facilities in the US, South Africa, China, India and Chile – as well as its branches in



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France, Spain, Dubai and worldwide representatives, GKD is close to markets anywhere in the world.

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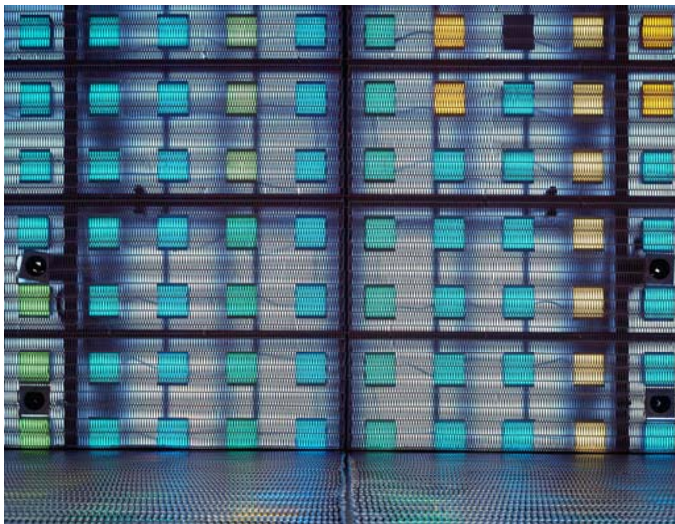


Picture 1: Variable space for events on Hamburg's Reeperbahn – shapefully clad and protected by GKD wire mesh.

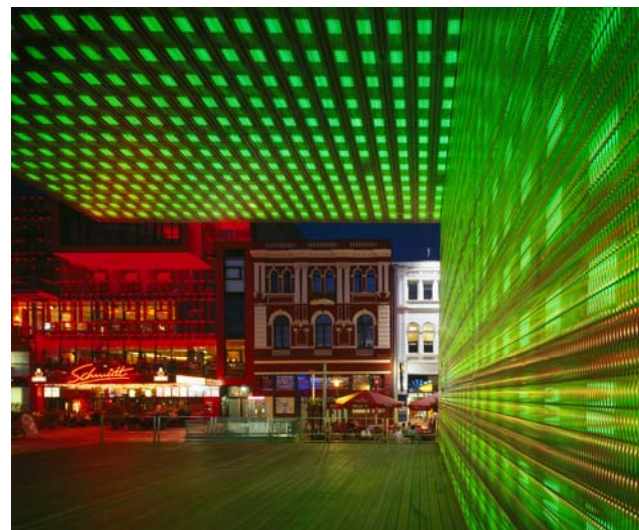


Picture 2: Two stages vis à vis – the modern design of the square and the purism of the stage constructions enhance the look of the Spielbudenplatz.

Picture 1-4 © GKD/Ralf Buscher



Picture 3: LED packets integrated behind the glass and wire mesh illuminate the stages at night with infinite color variations.



Picture 4: 2,560 LED pixel dots create colorful lighting effects on the Escale mesh.

We will be happy to send you the desired images in printable resolution by e-mail.

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