

Plan H

Drone photo of Plan H LED light installation at the Max-Frisch bad in the workers' district of Albisrieden, Zurich. Green and white Unex LED lights, 11 M²

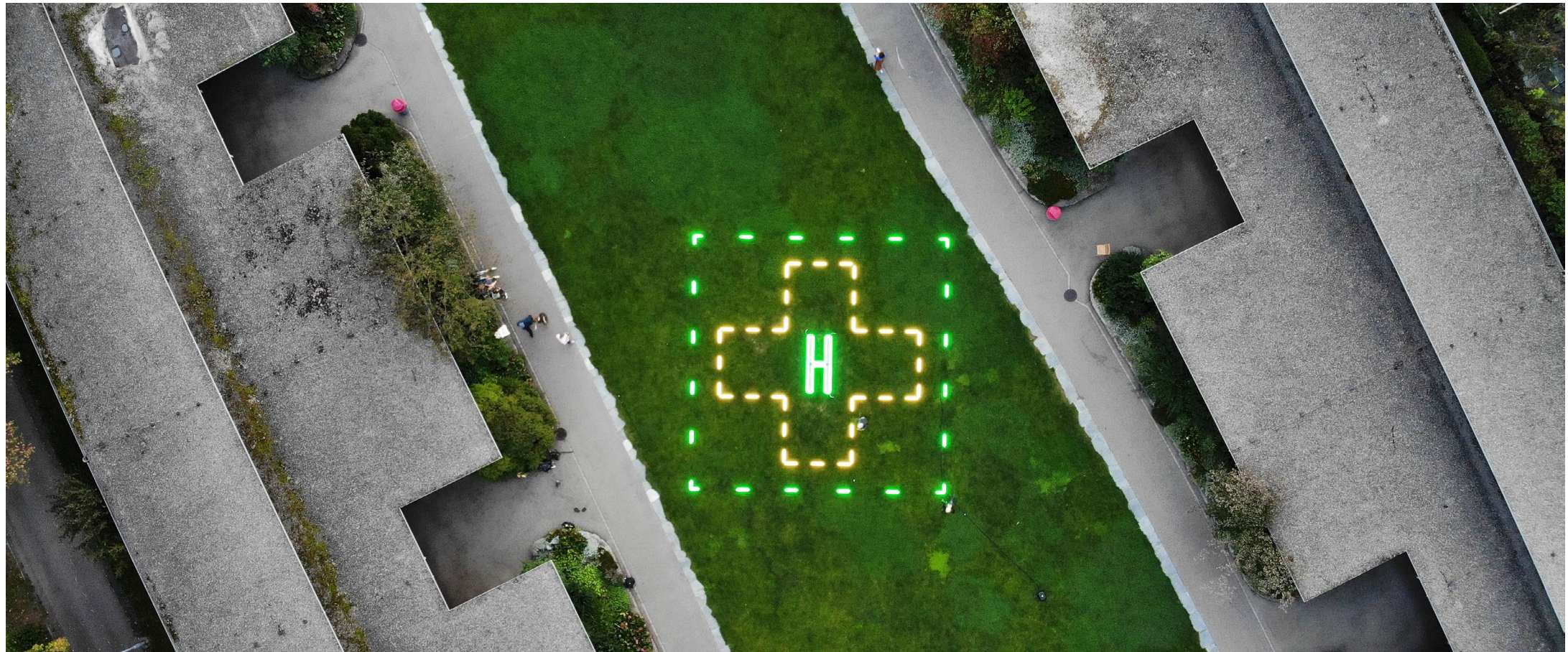


In 1943 Max Frisch submitted his design for a new outdoor pool to Zürich's city council. The principle was to provide a modern outdoor swimming facility for the growing city, one that would be accessible to all and be located in the worker's district of Albisrieden.

'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. These are the precise words written in the World Health Organisation's 1947 constitution that inspired this word 'wellness'. In recent times, this aspirational adjective has become more commonly associated with luxury spas and beauty treatments; however, the freedom to pursue a well state-of-being is an essential human right and not a luxury.

In 2020, amid the coronavirus pandemic, we once again found ourselves under the guidance of the World Health Organisation, worrying about the collective health of social bodies. 'Healthy' has come to define the non-infected. We have seen a new kind of health-based nationalism, as we compare infection rates in different countries, and borders close in vain. The virus infects indiscriminately of wealth or status, spreading through expensive ski resorts and ravaging communities without the resources to fight it. The sculptural installation, Plan H, takes the form of a full-size helipad marked out on the ground in green and white LED lights.

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The apothecary-green is a salve for all the emergency-red that fills our field of vision right now. Green is a reference to modern medicine's plant-based history and the green snakes associated with its alchemical roots. This green now evokes health and the good luck that being healthy implies.

Plan H is both a marker of this era and a monument to the health workers who will see us through these dark times. Helicopters, normally involved in transporting the rich or rescuing people off mountains, have played an invaluable role in the distribution of patients as hospitals are over-run. They have gone from being exclusive to essential infrastructure. As the virus mutates, contingency planning has proved impossible with conflicting government restrictions struggling to contain its spread. Planning our lives has become comedic; no sooner is a plan in place it can be upended.

Perhaps the only 'plan' we could say is consistent is health workers' plan to uphold their Hippocratic oath, to maintain their duties of care no matter the personal risks involved. In this time, we have found our physical freedoms curtailed: the freedom of movement, the freedom to fly, the freedom to gather, and the freedom to swim in pools, amongst many other things. Redefining health for the situation, we find ourselves in, we now grasp, better than ever, what has always been known: that health is multidimensional; our mind and bodies are part of complex living systems of interconnections we have yet to map.

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