



V&A Dundee

Night Fever: Designing Club Culture

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Dance floor at Xenon, New York, 1979. © Bill Bernstein / David Hill Gallery, London

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**“The key of the success of Studio 54 is that it’s a dictatorship at the door and a democracy on the dance floor.”
– Andy Warhol**

Night Fever: Designing Club Culture is the first large-scale examination of the relationship between club culture and design, charting the evolution of nightclubs from the 1960s to today.

Nightclubs are spaces for adventure and escape, and have always encouraged experimental and radical design, from New York’s Studio 54 to Manchester’s Hacienda.

From Italy to New York, Paris, Manchester, London, Beirut and Berlin, and into everyone’s homes today through online streaming, the exhibition charts how nightclub design has changed and developed.

The exhibition will include a new section on Scotland’s unique and distinct club culture, including legendary club nights in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paisley, exploring how the Scottish club scene holds closer ties to the music and influences of Chicago, Detroit and Europe than London clubs.

The exhibition celebrates these critical cultural spaces at a very important moment, as we all look to a brighter future where everyone can come back together, to dance and to enjoy shared public experiences once again.

Nightclubs are an example of a total designed experience, employing architecture, art, fashion, graphics, lighting, performance and sound to create an immersive sensory experience where design, music and technology meet on the dancefloor.

Night Fever: Designing Club Culture is a UK-exclusive exhibition at V&A Dundee, from 1 May 2021 to 9 January 2022.

Developed by the Vitra Design Museum and ADAM – Brussels Design Museum, it includes films, photography, posters, flyers, and fashion, as well as a light and music installation.

***Night Fever: Designing Club Culture* at V&A Dundee is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.**

#VADNightFever

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Key nightclub designs featured in the exhibition include the following.

The Electric Circus, New York, 1967



For the Electric Circus, club owner Jerry Brandt brought together a true supergroup of artists and designers. Upon entering, visitors were greeted by a psychedelic mural in Day-Glo colours by artist Louis Delsarte.

The organic flexible structure, which shaped the space and served as a backdrop for projections by artist Anthony Martin, was designed by Charles Forberg. It evolved out of an exhibition design Forberg had created for the 8th Milan Triennale in 1964.

The technical control centre for the immersive light and sound experiences of Electric Circus was conceived by Don Buchla, a pioneer in the development of synthesisers. Morton Subotnick, avant-garde musician and composer of electronic music, was the club's art director. The logo and the font for Electric Circus were designed by Chermayeff & Geismar and used by Tomi Ungerer for a series of posters.

Space Electronic, Florence, 1969



Space Electronic opened in an old engine repair shop in Florence in February 1969. Its architects and owners were the Radical Design collective Gruppo 9999 (Carlo Calдини, Fabrizio Fiumi, Mario Preti, and Paolo Galli) and local friend Mario Bolognesi. Furnishings included salvaged washing machine drums and refrigerator casings as well as a parachute suspended from the ceiling. Key inspiration came from a visit by Calдини and Preti to New York's Electric Circus in 1967.

Space Electronic was inspired by Marshall McLuhan's concept of the transformative possibilities of electronic media and utopian ideas of the role of architecture. With the club embracing new forms of technology, from slide projectors to CCTV, as well as an eclectic programme including music and theatre acts, an architecture school, and a vegetable garden planted on the dance floor.

Studio 54, New York, 1977



Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell's Studio 54 is perhaps the most famous disco of all time. The club was founded in New York in 1977, a time when the media cult surrounding figures from film, music, and sports took on a new dimension. Studio 54 provided stars and wannabes not only a place to party, but also the ideal platform to be seen.

At the entrance, bouncers decided by means of the infamous velvet cord who went inside and who remained outside. Rubell called his selection of guests "mixing the salad", by which he meant the right mix of celebrities and unknowns for a successful club night.

The photos shown in the exhibition by Bill Bernstein and Hasse Persson portray the guests styled for various occasions; they are a testimony to the extravagant parties that shook the dance floor of Studio 54 at the height of the disco era.

Paradise Garage, New York, 1977

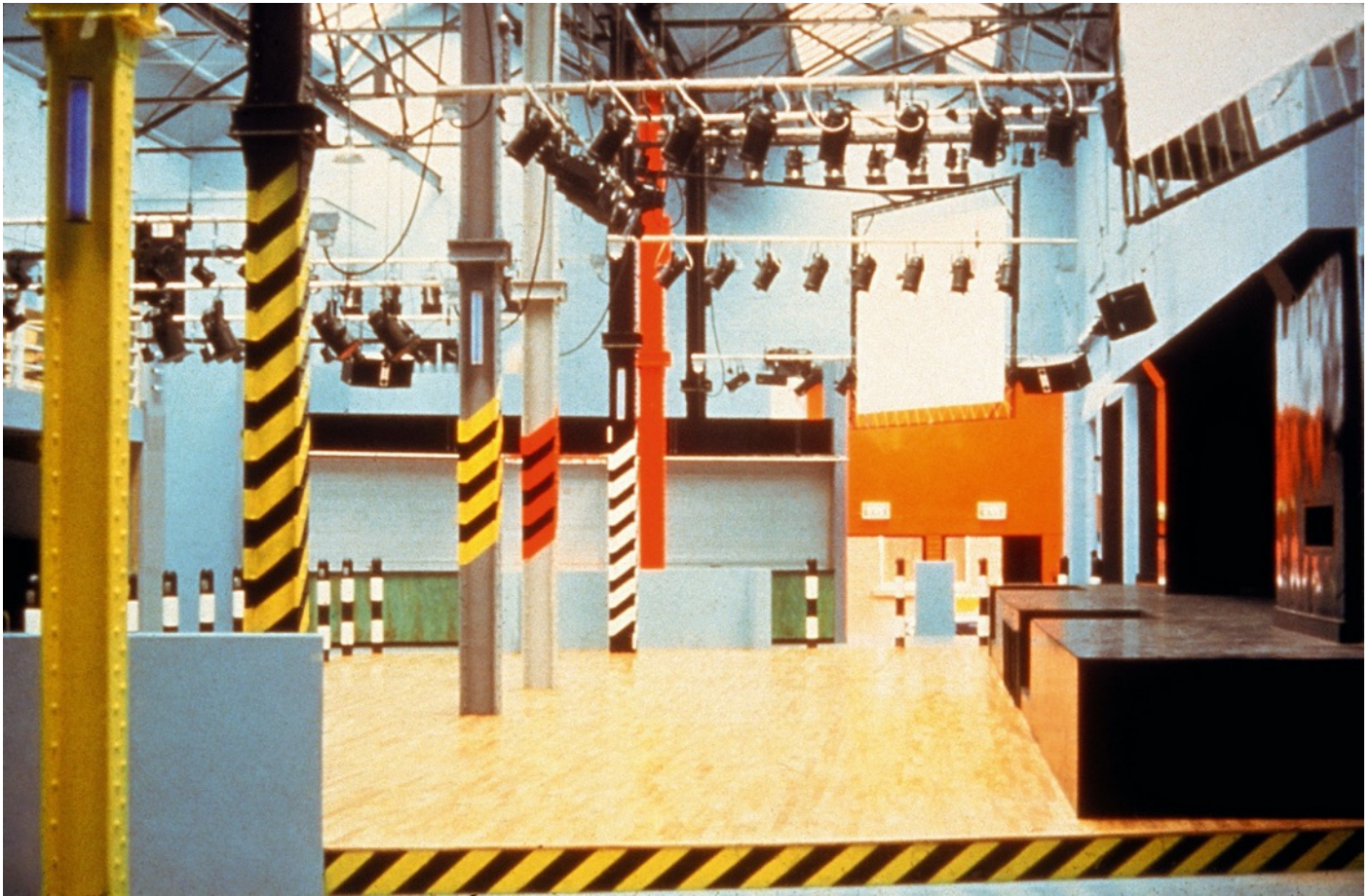


The Paradise Garage was located on the first floor of a parking garage in the New York neighbourhood of SoHo and opened the same year as Studio 54, in 1977. At this club, which was frequented by predominantly Black American gay men as well as wider members of the LGBTQ+ community, it was less about guests' grandstanding than about music and dancing.

Richard Long and Alan Fierstein developed a sound system that was tailored to resident DJ Larry Levan and at 10,000 watts combined the power of a live concert with the warmth and nuance of a living room hi-fi system. With sets that mixed elements of house and disco, Levan shaped the genre of garage house.

The club, at which Levan's friend Keith Haring was a regular guest, was forced to close in 1987 after the founder Michael Brody fell ill with AIDS. Brody's former partner Mel Cheren, who ran the label West End Records, wore the Paradise Garage logo as a tattoo on his arm and was involved in the fight against AIDS until his death in 2007.

The Haçienda, Manchester, 1982



The Haçienda was founded by the owners of Factory Records and the band New Order, in a former shipping warehouse in Manchester in 1982. The club's ground breaking postindustrial, postmodern interior design was conceived by designer Ben Kelly.

With cool blue-grey paint on the walls and floors, eye-catching black and yellow signal stripes, and black and white bollards, Kelly emphasised the industrial feel of the former warehouse, translating the aesthetics of Peter Saville's Factory Records designs into three dimensions. From the mid 1980s, the Haçienda developed into the centre of British rave culture and was the meeting place for many of bands that became the cornerstones of the acid house music genre.

The Haçienda lost its club licence after clashes between rival drug gangs selling ecstasy, forcing it to close in 1997. The building was demolished two years later, with the site being converted in luxury apartments bearing the club's name. The Haçienda has nevertheless lived on in people's imaginations, offering a blueprint for the creative revitalisation of the former textile mills of Manchester in the years that have followed.

Area, New York, 1983



Founded by Christopher and Eric Goode and Shawn Hausman, Area opened in 1983 on Hudson Street in New York's Tribeca district. Area merged art and nightlife in unprecedented ways. Every six weeks the club's 1,200 square metre site was completely transformed within four days and refurbished to a predetermined theme. The budget for these conversions was around \$30,000, or £25,000.

During the four years that Area existed, it featured 25 different themes, among them science fiction, suburbia, natural history, and sport. Actors, some of whom were on the club's production team, took on roles to address the theme. With Area, the club became an environment: it was simultaneously installation art and a stage for performance art.

The invitations for the opening of each new theme were designed by the club's inhouse designers and were as unusual and original as the interior installations. They ranged from water soluble pills, mouse traps, and 3-D glasses to egg shells and cheese slices.

Sub Club, Glasgow, 1987 – present



At its inception, Sub Club was a roving club night hosted by Graham Wilson, Sam Piacentini and Allan Campbell in various venues around Glasgow. It eventually set down roots at 22 Jamaica Street, Glasgow and Sub Club, as we know it today, was opened on 1 April 1987 by Wilson and Gregg McLeod.

The basement club has a long history as a musical venue with various incarnations. In the 1950s it was known as Le Cavé, a late night speakeasy that hosted performances by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald; in the 1970s it was the Jamaica Inn steakhouse and latterly it was known as Lucifer's. Sub Club has hosted many seminal DJs and legendary club-nights such as Atlantis, Subculture and Optimo. Sub Club has become one of the longest running and most beloved dance venues in the world.

Kinky Gerlinky, London, 1989

The monthly club night Kinky Gerlinky took place from 1989 to 1994 at various locations in London's East End. It was initially held at Legends, then Café de Paris, Shaftesbury's, and then eventually found a permanent home at the Empire Ballroom. Kinky Gerlinky was the nickname of Gerlinde Costiff who, together with her husband, ran the club night and the fashion boutique World.

The Costiffs were clients and friends of the fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, whose custom-made outfits Gerlinde wore regularly at Kinky Gerlinky events. An eclectic club night, Kinky Gerlinky included live music and fashion shows, reminiscent of the Ballroom scene of New York. The more outrageous, glamorous, or erotic an outfit

a prospective clubber was wearing, the greater the likelihood they had of making it past the bouncer. As a result of the club's success, it became a mainstay of the LGBTQ+ community, opening up the concept of 'Kink' to a wider audience, and led to the night being booked at other venues across Europe.

The Rhumba Club, 1991 – present, Scotland, multiple locations

A roving, chameleon-like night across central and east Scotland, The Rhumba Club started in February 1991 at Roxanne's Nightclub, Perth. It was founded by Wayne Dunbar and Zammo, and was one of the first nights in Scotland where house music was presented as a club night. Over its 30 year history, it has appeared at Fat Sam's, Dundee; Citrus Club, Edinburgh; Ballys, Arbroath; and Ice Factory, Perth.

Over its many locations, a Balearic influence has been integral. Unlike other clubs and club nights, it did not stick to a particular genre, always creating an exciting balance between American Garage, Techno and House. Over the past few years, The Rhumba Club team have diversified into festivals and weekend extravaganzas, but still pay homage to the classic club night by regularly returning to the Ice Factory, Perth.

Tresor, Berlin, 1991



Tresor was Berlin's first techno club. It was founded in the underground bank vaults of the former Wertheim department store, built on Leipziger Strasse in the 1890s. The club's thick walls, made of reinforced concrete several metres thick, along with its barred doors, and the old safety deposit boxes, contributed to its special rugged atmosphere. This contributed to its legendary reputation and led the club to becoming a major European hub for techno DJs from Detroit.

Following the proposal to develop Leipziger Platz in the mid 1990s, club founder Dimitri Hegemann advocated the construction of a Tresor Tower. Based on designs by Hilmer & Sattler and plans by architect Aldo Rossi, the development would have seen a development where the club, record store, music producers, and book publishers, would have coexisted on one site. Due to disagreements between the investor and the city of Berlin, the development eventually fell through. In 2005 Tresor had to leave its original location. Since 2007 it has found a new home in a former heating plant on Köpenicker Strasse. Currently Dimitri Hegemann is working on plans to open a Detroit branch of Tresor.

B018, Beirut, 1998

The nightclub B018 opened in 1998 in a neighbourhood near the Port of Beirut. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90) the area became a refugee camp that local militia attacked, wiping out its inhabitants. In reaction to the historically charged nature of the site and the difficulty of creating a viable entertainment venue there, architect Bernard Khoury decided to embed the building, like a bunker, below ground. Positioned in the centre of a circular concrete disc, it is raised only slightly above ground level, appearing almost invisible during the day.

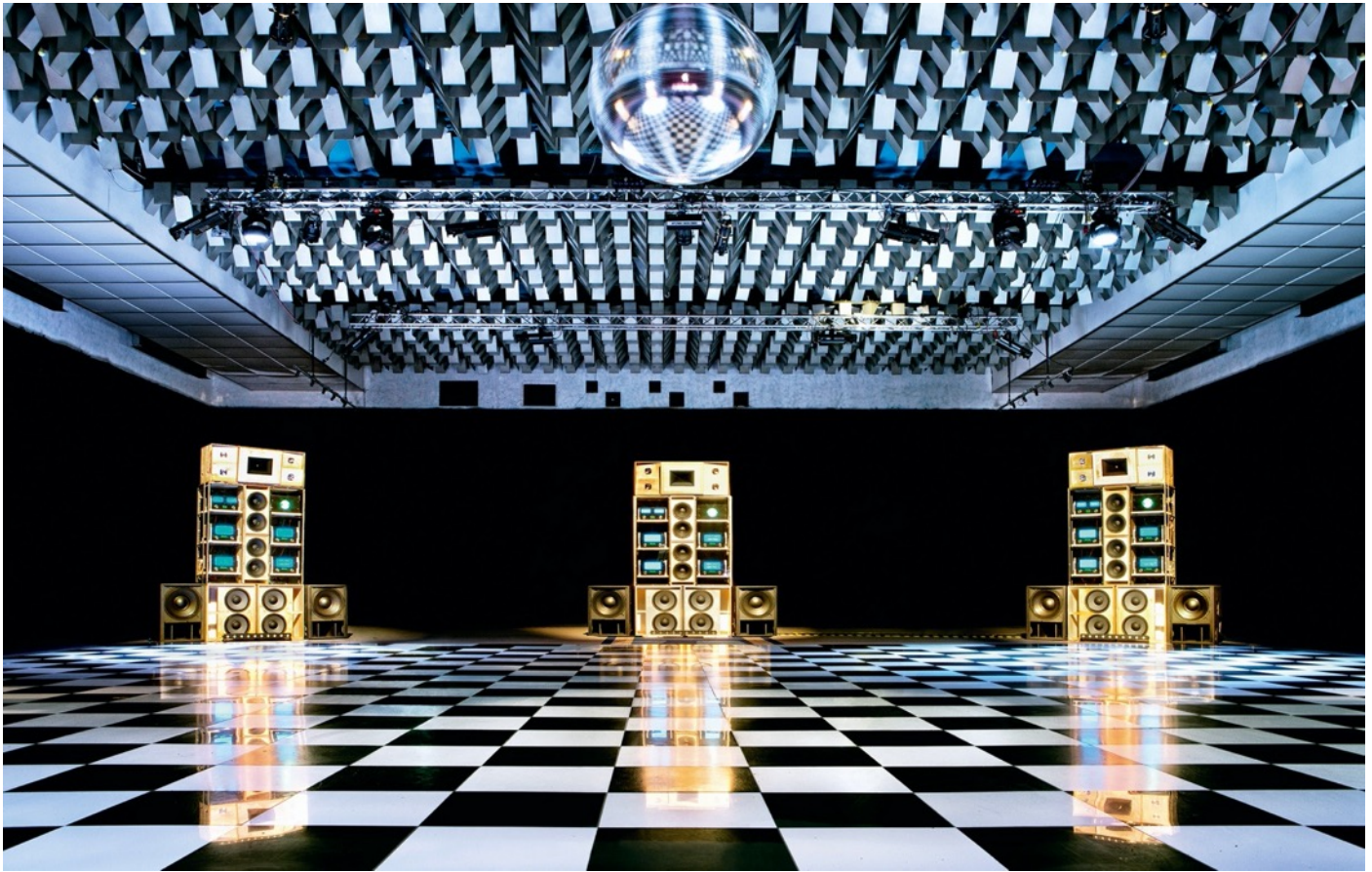
The club comes to life late at night, when its hydraulic roof structure retracts and opens like a giant lid. The opening of the roof exposes the club to the world above, and once raised a mirrored surface on the underside of one roof segment reflects the cityscape back into the club. Inside, sofas with collapsible backs serve as dancing platforms, that act like stages for the performers and clubbers.

Berghain, Berlin, 2004

Berghain is one of the most famous techno clubs in the world. Its name is derived from the city district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg where, in 2004, Berghain opened on the site of a former power plant, now a listed building. The club owes its reputation not only to the featured DJs and a programme of exhibitions, concerts, and performances, but also to a rigorous door policy and a strict ban on filming and taking photographs.

The artist Philip Topolovac has created a cork model of the club. In doing so has taken up what was a fashionable pursuit of the 18th and 19th centuries – creating miniatures of classical buildings in cork. Instead of a depiction of an Italian court building, Topolovac's *I've never been to Berghain* (2017/18) lovingly recreates the infamous club, both as a coveted location in the present-day and as mini projection of ideas, for those who only know the building from the outside.

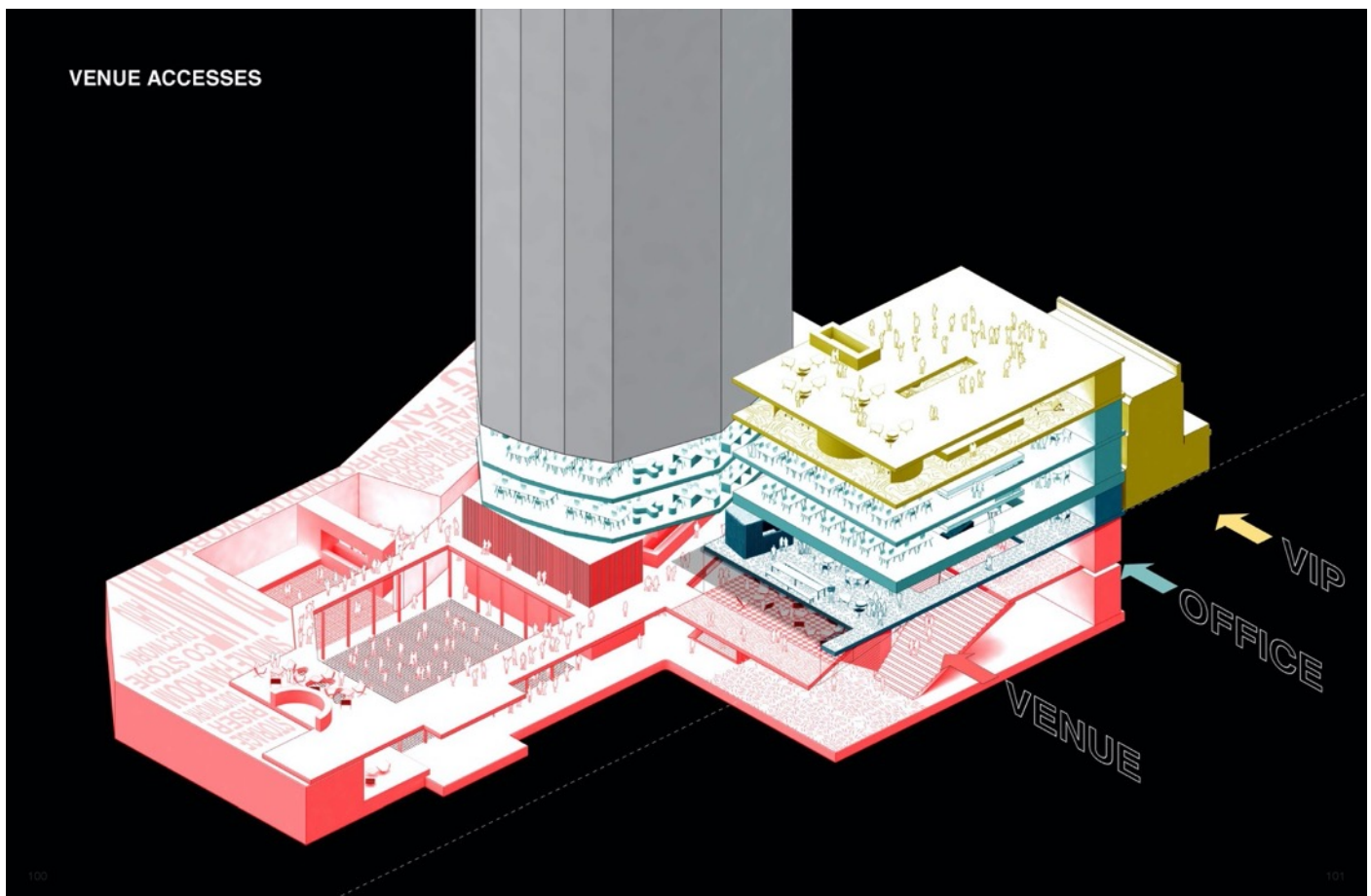
Despacio, 2013



Despacio is a custom built sound system designed by LCD Soundsystem front man James Murphy. Murphy worked alongside audio engineer John Klett, as well as David and Stephen Dewaele from 2ManyDJs and Soulwax to create the unique high fidelity listening experience. The sound system was first presented at Manchester International Festival in 2013 and has since travelled to different venues and festivals across the globe.

At the heart of the system are seven stacks of speakers, three meters high and containing 48 amplifiers, adding up to 50,000 watts. One of the key references is Richard Long's legendary sound system, created for the influential DJ Larry Levan at Paradise Garage. The project is also guided by the Dewaele brothers' fascination for Ibiza's early club culture of the 1970s, where the speaker systems rather than the DJs were the focus. Despacio, which means slow in Spanish, aims to recreate the true Balearic spirit with an eclectic mix of music and slowed down swampy beats.

Ministry of Sound II, London, 2015



In 2015 club superbrand Ministry of Sound approached the Dutch based Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) to submit designs for a competition to design a new London based home for the brand. OMA's winning entry for the project was based on research conducted by AMO, the research arm of the architecture studio, which investigated European club culture from the 1960s to the 2000s. The research highlighted a change in people's cultural habits, exploring the tide of club closures, the move to online dating and 24 hour gym culture.

In response OMA proposed a metamorphic mixed used build, the Ministry of Sound II. The proposal would have seen the building active 24 hours a day and combined co-working spaces, a radio station, a spa, and a nightclub. The project was never realised. However, in 2017 Ministry of Sound opened the fitness studio Ministry does Fitness.

The Mothership, Detroit, 2015



The Mothership is a mobile DJ booth designed by Detroit based architecture and design studio Akoaki. Created in 2015 for the launch of O.N.E. (Oakland North End) Mile project, it seeks to promote the city's rich African American music heritage. Like major parts of Detroit, the North End has suffered from the long term economic decline of the city. Its former nightclubs lie in ruins. The name for the project is taken from the 'Mothership' which funk legend George Clinton used as his own infamous stage prop, used in concerts with his band Parliament-Funkadelic.

Characterising the studio's participatory approach, Akoaki involved Parliament-Funkadelic in their design process. In the 1970s the Funk musicians staged important appearances on Oakland Avenue. In order to foster new grassroots developments in the neighbourhood, Akoaki's project also aims to raise awareness of the importance of these clubs as place makers that create a sense of identity in the community.