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National College of Art and Design

Design Faculty

Department of Fashion and Textiles

Nightclubs -
A Reflection of
Society.

by

Lorraine Mac Cready

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Introduction

“A nightclub is about capturing the moment.”(Gandee, “Heaven’s Gate”, *Architectural Record*, vol. 173, mid-Sept. 1985,p. 126) This is the assertion of Ian Schrager, who co-ordinated the Design of the Palladium nightclub, such contemporary nightclubs are the subject for discussion and analysis in this thesis. I have selected four New York nightclubs- Club U.S.A., Tunnel , The Palladium and Limelight. These nightclubs are going to be treated as objects which can be read into. This thesis will discuss how the interior design of these nightclubs and, secondly , the form of entertainment which exists within them, reflect and are influenced by the society they exist within.

A visit to New York and an introduction to these four clubs were the beginnings of this thesis. Peter Gatien, owner of the four nightclubs chosen stated that, “New York is always at the forefront and we know it.” (Smith, “Land of a Thousand Dances”, *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 February 1993, p.13) New York clubs, because they are, apparantly, so groundbreaking, appeared to be a good subject for discussion.As Gatien has a monopoly on the club scene in New York, he must be catering to market demand. It would be ridiculous for him to compete against himself. Therefore, He has to differ the venuesto cater to different sections of the market. Thus , through an examination and analysis of his ventures, an overview of the whole club scene can be ascer-

tained. The first thing that strikes you when you analyse the four clubs is that the style of design strongly echoes today's society. Therefore this was the obvious topic of discussion.

As this is such a contemporary topic, there are no books written on these particular clubs. Primary research forms the basis of this thesis. The main sources have been visits to the clubs under discussion, photographs taken and information offered by people involved in the clubs. Articles from periodicals (such as *Interiors* and *The Face*), television documentaries (such as *Rave New World*) and M.T.V. have all played an important part in providing an overview of nightlife and popular culture, particularly its development in the last decade. However, recent publications (such as *The Condition of Postmodernity* and *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*) have been very helpful in supplying information on the development of society, subcultures and nightlife, and the evolution of design within the last century.

It is important, at this early stage, to establish what exactly is understood by the term 'nightclub', as this thesis discussion revolves around this contemporary form of entertainment. The *Collins Gem Dictionary* defines a nightclub as an "establishment for dancing, music, etc., opening late at night and remaining open until morning" (Foreman, 1972, p.347). To expand on this definition, a contemporary nightclub is a venue frequented mainly by young people, who dance to pre-recorded music, which is selected and played by a disc-jockey. Although the dancefloor is the main attraction, areas are provided for people to sit, drink, chat and rest. However a nightclub, nowadays, is much more than just a place to drink, dance and chat. It is a place of escape from banal, everyday routine. It is an experience, a spectacle, food for the senses. This is particularly true of the four clubs that I have

chosen for examination and analysis. These clubs “use evermore sophisticated, technological and overtly designed environments to delight their clientele.”(Princenthal, *ID*, V.32, June ‘85, p.50). Their interiors are full of unexpected and curious juxtapositions of objects and themes. It is for this reason that they are perfect as objects which can be read into.

To place the subject in context, chapter one will give a brief history. This will discuss key events within the evolution of nightclubs throughout the twentieth century. Developments within nightlife will be related to changes which were happening in society at the same time.

My whole thesis is based on the premise that nightclubs do not exist in a vacuum. It is possible to read into the interior design of a club, and gain some knowledge of the society it exists within. Chapter two will explain why this can be done, and will show that design details within the chosen clubs reflect certain aspects of American society, but particularly that of New York.

Certain elements of this society have been influenced by an international movement known as Postmodernism, as opposed to being influenced by the history of America. Chapter three will relate this movement to the interior design of the New York clubs.

Before analysing the New York nightclubs, the next chapter will, firstly, relate some of the developments, within nightlife and society in general, which led to the contemporary nightclub.

Chapter One

Nightclubs - A brief history

The aim of this of chapter is to make clear that nightclubs can be treated as objects which contain meanings and signs on a cultural level. This will be shown by relating key events within the evolution of nightlife. Developments within nightclubs will be shown to happen in tandem with changes within society - for example, when new cultural and social values and behaviour come into existence.

It is difficult to define what a nightclub is as nightclubs are ephemeral. They change and mutate with the times. Therefore, it is difficult to give a clear history. However, the origins of the nightclub can be traced back to New York at the turn of the century. It has been laid out in the introduction what is considered to be a nightclub in contemporary life. This chapter will examine how the modern nightclub differs from the forms of nightlife available at the turn of the century. Connections can then be made between developments within nightlife and developments within the society of the same time.

Lewis A. Erenberg, in his book *Steppin' Out*, describes in great detail the origins of the nightclub, placing the developments in nightlife within a sociological context. The cabaret that existed in New York , at the turn of the century, became the 'nightclub'. The name change was a result of promoters working their way around the laws of the time. (Erenberg, 1981, P129). Erenberg explains how the evolution of the cabaret or nightclub marked the move away from the values held within the Victorian society of the nineteenth century. It is important, here, to understand these values and the social structure that existed at

the time. By examining this new form of entertainment, the nightclub, and comparing it to what had existed previously, it becomes obvious that peoples attitudes to life were changing. Before the evolution of the nightclub in America, nightlife was not really a public event. The social life of the well-to-do was conducted within "the cloistered walls of home and business" (Erenberg, 1981, p. xi). The upper-class had their private balls, dinners and parties or they dined at aristocratic restaurants after a visit to the theatre. It was the age of Victorianism, where one's social life had to be genteel and refined. There was much segregation between the classes, races and sexes. The lower-classes and coloureds - who were considered outside respectable society - found their rowdier forms of entertainment within the saloons, music halls, dance halls and red-light districts. There was a segregation of passion from respectable amusements.

These moralistic values were becoming a burden, and it was to the less restrained and more relaxed groups within society that the middle-and upper-classes looked to help change their views of life. "The relaxation of social and personal boundaries and identities in the twentieth century is clearly revealed in the particular setting and style of the cabaret and its entertainments" (Erenberg, 1981 p.xiii). The informal setting of the cabaret had its origins in the realm of lower class amusements. It had previously been considered illicit and the 'new' nightclubs had obviously to be less rowdy and more 'cleaned up', in general. However, it was still a step towards more "risque entertainment" (Erenberg, 1981, p.25) for the higher classes. The 'Folie Bergere', opened in 1911, was the first official respectable nightclub.

Looking first to the setting of the nightclub, it alone reveals much about the changing values. We can refer to fig. 1, which depicts the interior of Bustanobys, a nightclub situated on Broadway, New York. The photograph was taken about 1914. The main thing to note about nightclubs, in general, is that they were a combination of a restaurant and the theatre. However, the performance was transferred from the stage to the floor. In Bustanobys we can see couples dancing on the floor. This performance area was not down one end of the room, separate from the diners. It was an integral part of the interior, surrounded by tables. This arrangement was vastly different from the theatre where the entertainers and the performance were completely separate from the audience. This more formal



Fig. 1
Bustanaby's, Thirty-ninth St. and Broadway

structure had not allowed for much intimacy between the audience and performers nor any crossover and exchange of roles between the two. Within the nightclub, the entertainment was, at first, incidental to the drinking and dining. However, it soon became more of a focal point and eventually customers became more involved by stepping out onto the floor to dance, thus sharing the role of the entertainer. This reflects how reserved and genteel behaviour was becoming less important to that society. This new informality is even mirrored within the type of furniture used in the interior of Bustanobys. The round tables are more conducive to conversation than long rectangular tables would be. The chairs, with their rounded backs and light, airy structure are, similarly, less formal than other seating which could have been chosen. This furniture has not been arranged in strict, straight lines. The tables are close enough to each other for patrons to turn to the adjacent table to have a chat with another customer. This encourages an easy friendly atmosphere. There are mirrors around the room which attract further attention to the patrons actions rather than directing attention at the entertainer. In this way, crowd participation is given an even more elevated importance.

The dances, referred to in the previous paragraph, brought couples closer together. During the Victorian era husbands and wives had led almost separate lives. They rarely spent time together alone. They embraced the dance craze which took hold of America from 1912 to 1916 (Erenberg, 1981, p.146), as they felt a need for greater intimacy with their partners. Dancing was not only a way of exploring their relationship with their partners, but also of expressing emotions through their bodily movements. This sensuality would have previously been frowned upon under the Victorian standard of strict self control, and would have been considered primitive and lower class. We can see the continued loosening of morals during that period if we compare the attire of the 'Balloon girls' in figure 2 and the sexier, more exotic, lack of attire on Gilda Gray in figure 3. The former illustration dates to 1915, whereas, Gilda Gray was photographed in 1925. All the dancers were members of the same performance group called the Ziegfeld Follies.

It is clear from this account of nightclubs at the beginning of the twentieth century that they can be treated as objects which possess a semiotic value. This



Fig. 2
Balloon Girls from Ziegfeld's Midnight Frolic, 1915



Fig. 3
Gilda Gray in the
1925 Ziegfeld
Follies

new form of leisure - the viewing of 'risque entertainment' by respectable members of society - could not have taken place unless changes within the value systems of the individual, and society as a whole, were taking place. A detailed account of what happened to the nightclub between the cabaret in New York at the beginning of the century and its present form, is not particularly relevant. What is important is to realise that nowadays "clubs are for kids" (Garbarino, "Nightclubbing in the '90s", *N.Y. Newsday*, Dec. 15 1992, p.49). They are built and decorated with that specific market in mind. The types of music played in these venues are almost exclusively bought by young people. However, at the turn of the century, this section of society did not seem to have much inclusion in nightlife. Erenberg describes how "during the 1910s, the well-to-do young, spurred on by the dance craze, visited the cafes, but in the 1920s several clubs catered specifically to them, playing the favourite music of a college crowd." (Erenberg, 1981, p.242). However, they were just following the example of their parents, to which the nightclubs had originally catered. Adolescents did not seem to have a life of their own.

Today this situation has been totally turned on its head. Vast nightclubs, such as Peter Gatien's four large-scale New York clubs are now revolved around young people. Entrepreneurs, such as Gatien make gigantic profits on these enterprises. "In 1992, Limelight and Palladium grossed about \$15 million." (Smith, "Mr. U.S.A.", *New York*, Jan. 18, 1993, p.37). For nightclubs to hold this position within today's culture, there must have been some massive changes, within the structure of society and roles of certain groups, since the earlier years of this century. These changes are related to the development of a youth culture.

Helen Rees describes youth as "something new, a product of the surge in mass culture, after the Second World War" (Rees, 1986, p.3). She is referring to British youth culture which began to emerge at the end of the fifties. She explains that this surge in mass culture resulted from an increased emphasis on the selling of commodities. This was due to improved transportation and communications which "freed the circulation of goods and information from the social and cultural controls which had previously determined them" (Rees, 1986, p.3). This growth of mass culture particularly affected young people. The reason for this is, by 1959 there were four million people between the ages of 13 and 25, due to the

highest birth rate that Britain had experienced since 1880. (McDermott, 1987, p.10). Young people were now a large proportion of the total population and thus were a major group of 'possible consumers'. A youth consumer market had actually emerged earlier in America. Eugene Gilbert, a nineteen year old student, actually invented the 'teenager' in 1945 as a category of market research. Certain conditions have always been in existence which would encourage the development of a youth culture. One such condition would be the fact that any income that a young person possesses is largely disposable - as they do not have any other people who are financially dependant on them. But it wasn't until this consumer market was created that young people began to participate in a scene which was particular to them. They now began to set their own styles of dress, music and behaviour, instead of reflecting the adult world.

How does the development of a youth culture relate to contemporary nightclubs being a youth phenomenon? As has just been explained, youth culture is founded on commercialism. Young people express themselves through objects of consumption. This form of expression is a result of the position they occupy within society. The opinions of adolescents are not always considered important or relevant within the adult world, and are often put down to being part of a phase that they are going through. Consequently, they are more likely to express their opinions through their own particular style. Clothes and, particularly, the way they are worn, are important elements of this style. The type of music that a person listens to also tends to reflect aspects of their personality. Nightclubs, like clothes and music, are commodities. Style and attitude are increasingly what they are selling. As Ian Schrager said of his project, the Palladium nightclub; "... after all, my liquor and my music are the same as everybody else's ... what we're selling here is the magic of the space". (Gandee, "Heaven's gate", *Architectural Record*, V 173, mid. Sept. 1985, p.137). Youths by choosing to go to one particular club rather than another are making statements about their beliefs, but obliquely through style. Nightclubs, in fact, have the power to encapsulate all the elements of youth culture.

Another reason why nightclubs are so suited to a younger generation is because they are the perfect place for young people to express themselves. Adolescence has always been a time when an individual is trying to have a more

clearly defined sense of identity. After being dictated to by the family and school authorities, it is now time to decide who they want to be. Clubs are somewhere they can escape from parents and other mentors. Also, it is easier within the sphere of leisure, than the areas of school or work, to explore ones feelings towards other people and oneself. It is a time which is set aside for relationships, whereas, school or work are more impersonal settings where a specific function or task has to be performed. Adolescence is also a time to develop many relationships with other people, some being of a romantic nature. There is an inbuilt need in all of us to find a partner. Whereas, a high percentage of people over thirty are part of a couple, adolescents are only just beginning to look for romance. Nightclubs provide a place where it is easier to meet people and overcome shyness. This is because peoples inhibitions are lowered due to the darkness and the abundance of alcohol. So, it is evident that nightclubs have always had the potential to be a place of youth. However, it wasn't until changes within society, such as the increased pressure placed on youth to be consumers that they actually became a place of youth.

In relating key developments within the history of nightclubs, it has been established that these clubs can be treated as objects which can be read into, which contain meanings and signs on a cultural level. The remainder of this thesis will deal, more specifically, with Peter Gatien's New York nightclubs. Through an examination of their interior design and the form of entertainment that exists within them, we can find out information about the society we live in today.

Chapter Two

Nightclubs - A reflection of American society

The four clubs that I have chosen to analyse are all situated in Manhattan, New York's centre. New York is the cultural and economic capital of the United States of America. National characteristics are often exaggerated within the capital of a country and are, therefore, easier to discern. So, by reading into the interior design of these nightclubs we can build a picture of American society. This is the primary aim of this chapter. It will firstly be explained why nightclubs have an enormous potential to reflect the social and moral attitudes of a nation.

All types of design have the potential to reflect aspects of society. If we look to other types of interior design, such as shop and restaurant design, it is obvious that this is so. For example, the natural interiors found in shops and restaurants over the last few years, tell us of the importance of eco-awareness at the moment. Natural fibres, such as jute, have been used in the floor coverings; display units have been made from wood, as opposed to metal; and walls have been painted with natural tones, instead of being painted in bright garish colours. A sense of style is being sold in these commercial outlets. However, the practicalities of layout and suitable display units can often outweigh the more creative design element. Ian Schrager, co-ordinator of the Palladium, believes that there are not as many practical elements to consider, in relation to nightclub design, which would stunt creativity.

Building a nightclub might be the ultimate kind of architecture. There is nothing to sell... no offices, no hotel rooms, no products, so [such a project] presents greater challenges and greater possibilities.

(Cohen, "The Palladium", *Interior Design*, Vol. 56, Oct. 1985, p.230).

This statement is not quite true. Something is being sold. Nightclubs are business ventures - a form of consumerism. The selling point is giving people what they want socially. . . They are, therefore, going to display social attitudes more than most other types of design.

How people act socially is different to how they would act during work hours. People have to modify their behaviour to a certain extent while working as they have a particular function to perform, a standard to meet, and a boss to be subservient to. Within the world of work, if a person acts how she feels like acting - for example, if the employee argues with the boss - this may result in the employee being fired. Therefore, working life may not reflect attitudes to social and cultural issues. Socialising is a release from this area where one can show more of a true self and act how one feels like acting, without as many negative consequences. Thus, by reading into the forms of nightlife available we can make generalisations about the social and cultural climate which exists.

Whereas most nightclubs reflect the society they exist within in a subtle way, the actual selling point of Club U.S.A. is reflecting the society of the United States. Aptly titled, it is described by the publicity office as an artistic vision of America that is both satirical and serious, mixing the cornerstones of U.S. society - commercialism, sex, entertainment and wealth. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse how the design of the club reflects each of these 'cornerstones'. The following section will deal with one of the most obvious foundations on which American society is based - commercialism. Club U.S.A. is located just off Times Square. Peter Gatien, owner of the club actually states that he is trying to bring Times Square inside his club. (Garbarino, "Nightclubbing in the '90s", *New York Newsday*, Dec. 15, 1992, p.48). Times Square is consumerism encapsulated. It will be discussed on the following pages how Club U.S.A. reflects Times Square. In reflecting this landmark it is in turn reflecting the commercial aspect of American society.

This emphasis on consumerism which exists in America- which is obviously

reflected in Times Square and Club U.S.A. - reveals much about the history of this society. The U.S.A. is a country without a past. New York was settled initially by the Dutch and the English in the seventeenth century. Since then, people from every corner of the world have arrived into America through Ellis Island in New York. Therefore this 'civilisation' - as opposed to what existed when the land was Indian territory - is recent in worldwide terms. The history of the 'new civilisation' did not stem from the area they now inhabited. The history, traditions and way of life of the native Indians were rejected. It is important for an individual and a collective race to possess a sense of history. This is not often realised until it is missing - this is illustrated by the need or strong desire of adopted children to search for their original mothers. America, devoid of a central history, which belonged to all the various groups of which its society consisted, therefore, clung to the new developments within this society and gave them a place of importance. One of these new developments is the emergence of a commercial society. Thus, consumerism has been placed on a pedestal. The fact that it is Times Square which is synonymous with New York - second, only, to the Statue of Liberty - is evidence of this importance.

Stephen Bayley puts this theory into these words; "...lost in a vast continent free of any but the most recent traditions, they crave symbols and symbolism". These symbols are provided, he says, by such brand names as Coca-Cola (Bayley, 1991, p.116) - the ultimate icon of America's commercial society. If we look at a photo of Times Square (Fig. 4) we can actually see this brand name emblazoned against a building. We can see further billboards trying to sell Konica cameras, Gold Star audio and video tapes, and 'Americas no. 1 Bean Coffee' in figure 5. Such advertisements are larger than life. If we look now to the entrance of Club U.S.A. (figure 6), we could almost be fooled into thinking that it was another billboard. The entire wall is covered by a mural of a woman's eyes. Of all the features in the human body, the eyes are the most engaging. You could not pass this mural by without it catching your eyes. These eyes are blue, rather than brown - blue eyes being more associated with fun. They are heavily made up with eyeliner and mascara - to represent passion and excitement. The design of the mural has been carefully thought out - like an advertising brief would be. These eyes are an image which embodies fun and excitement. The hope is that people will try to associate themselves with this image by going into the club. Their eyes actually



Fig. 4
Times Sq., New York



Fig. 5
Times Sq., New York



Fig. 6
Facade, Club USA

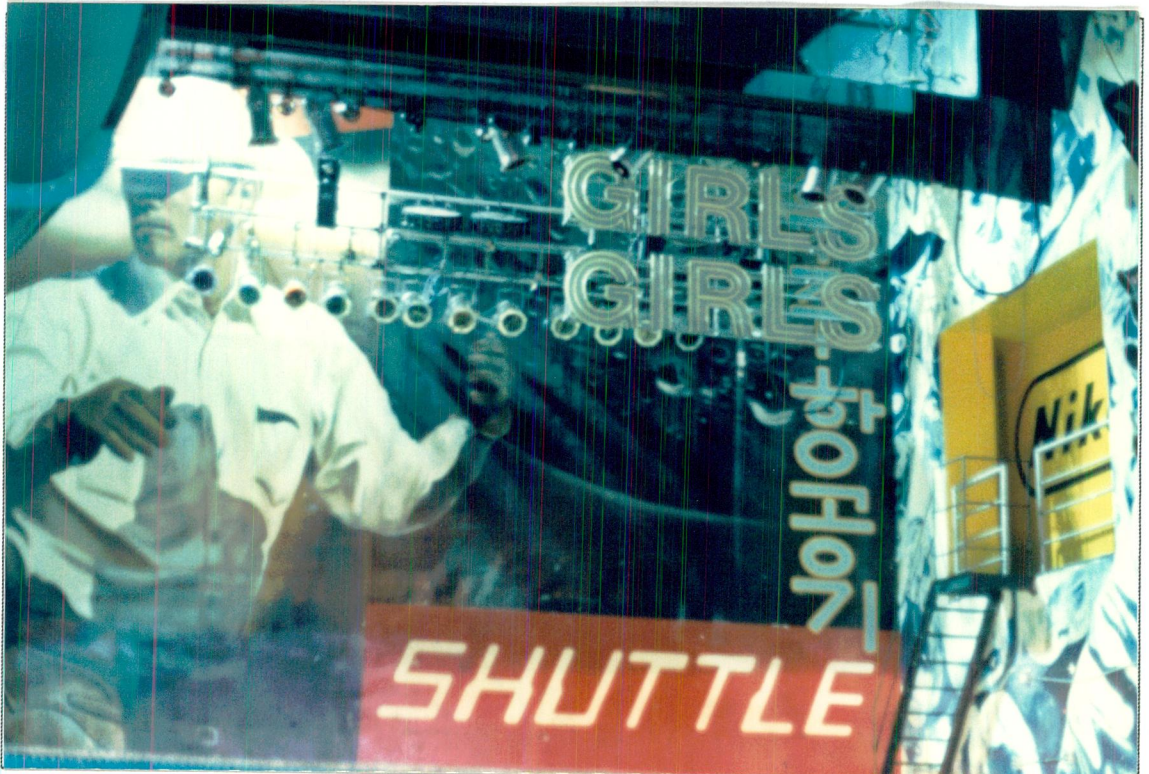


Fig. 7
Ground floor, Club USA

seem to be looking to the side as if they are 'checking out' the viewer. Thus, the viewer is made to feel that there is somebody who desires them within the club. Because of this positioning of the eyes, the image works even better as an advertising tool. The image is actually much more important than the name of the club, which seems to be the norm in advertising nowadays. The letters 'USA' fit neatly into a small corner of the wall. Although not given much space, these letters are still conspicuous due to the use of high-contrasting colours - white, black and red. Similar use of high-contrast or attention-grabbing colours can be seen on the billboards depicting the Coca-Cola bottle or the names of Broadway shows (fig.4). The mural is, therefore, both a reflection of the consumerist society it exists within, and an advertisement for an object of consumption - a nightclub.

The exterior of the club is only the beginning as regards references to consumption. The club is filled with backdrops and hoardings, the surfaces of which are decorated with brand names and icons of consumerism. One such icon is the Malbaro Man depicted in figure 7. He is the figure that is used to sell Malboro cigarettes to the nation. We can also see references to such companies as Nikon, Hoover and Sony. The word Trojan can be seen painted on a billboard. This is a make of condom. Sex has always been considered the greatest selling tool. Full advantage is taken of this knowledge within the interior of Club U.S.A. As we will see, in the chapter on subcultures, the theme of sexuality is totally overdone.

This consumerist society, which is reflected in Club U.S.A., has had more of an impact on the lives of the individual than is apparent at first look. There has been an increased emphasis on work and production in American society recently, which is related to the commercialism which exists. Many people living in America have two jobs. This is considered normal within this society. The pace of living has, therefore, accelerated for this nation. This has led to more stress in people's lives. This society has moved further away from natural, self-help methods of treating stress - one of these methods being rest and relaxation. They, instead, turn more to fantasy, fun and excitement - escaping problems, rather than dealing with them.

We can see this aspect of American society reflected in Peter Gatiens night-

clubs. They are the ultimate in fantasy zones and are, thus, catering to this desire to escape this increased stress in peoples lives. They are a massive collaboration between the sectors of art, design and entertainment. When people are socialing, they want to feel as far away from their object of stress as possible. A change is, afterall, as good as a rest - or so it is said. A concerted effort is being made within Peter Gatien's clubs to create an atmosphere which is totally unlike anywhere else - a complete release from the world of work and stress - an experience. Such an experience can be created by situating unexpected objects or areas within the nightclub. To make this point clearer, we can refer to Disneyland, an obvious example of this idea in action. Within the Disneyland complex there are many different worlds such as 'It's a Small World' (a miniature world), the Epcott Centre (which concentrates on space travel), the 'Wild West' and a jungle. This concept is more subtle within the design of Club U.S.A. An effort has been made to bring the mood of a red light district to the club (fig. 8). This mood is created by situating peep-show booths on the second floor of the club. The corridor leading to these booths is floored with tackily patterned carpet (fig.9). The ceiling is covered with lines of small light bulbs. Such details of decoration would be at home in an establishment of a red-light district. The mirrored walls and black P.V.C. couches add the final 'sleazy' touches. The club could be seen as an adults playground, the most fun feature being a slide from an upper balcony to the dance floor (fig.10), a 96-foot-long fiberglass tube with 50 strobe lights on the inside ceiling, it is certainly an experience. Another effort at playfulness is the photo-booth on the ground level (fig. 11). Everybody has the chance to take photos of themselves that they can laugh at the next day. In the Tunnel nightclub a sideroom is converted into a 'plastic-ball pit' (fig.12). These are usually found at fairs and festivals, in the childrens section. Protective cushioning is covered with hundreds of yellow hollow plastic balls. Clubbers can jump in, become immersed or try to wade through without losing their balance. The wall is covered with sheets of highly reflective silver plastic. The surface has bumps all over it, half spheres in fact (fig.13). These walls act as mirrors. If you look for your reflection you will see it repeated in each of the 'bumps' of the wall. Your reflection becomes more distorted if you look at it from a different angle. People probably get a childish interest in viewing themselves like this. Again, we can see that the emphasis is on fun and escapism.



Fig. 8
Peep show booths, Club USA



Fig. 9
Corridor, Club USA



Fig. 10
Slide from balcony to dance floor, Club USA



Fig. 11
Photo booth, Club USA



Fig. 12
Plastic-ball pit, Tunnel nightclub

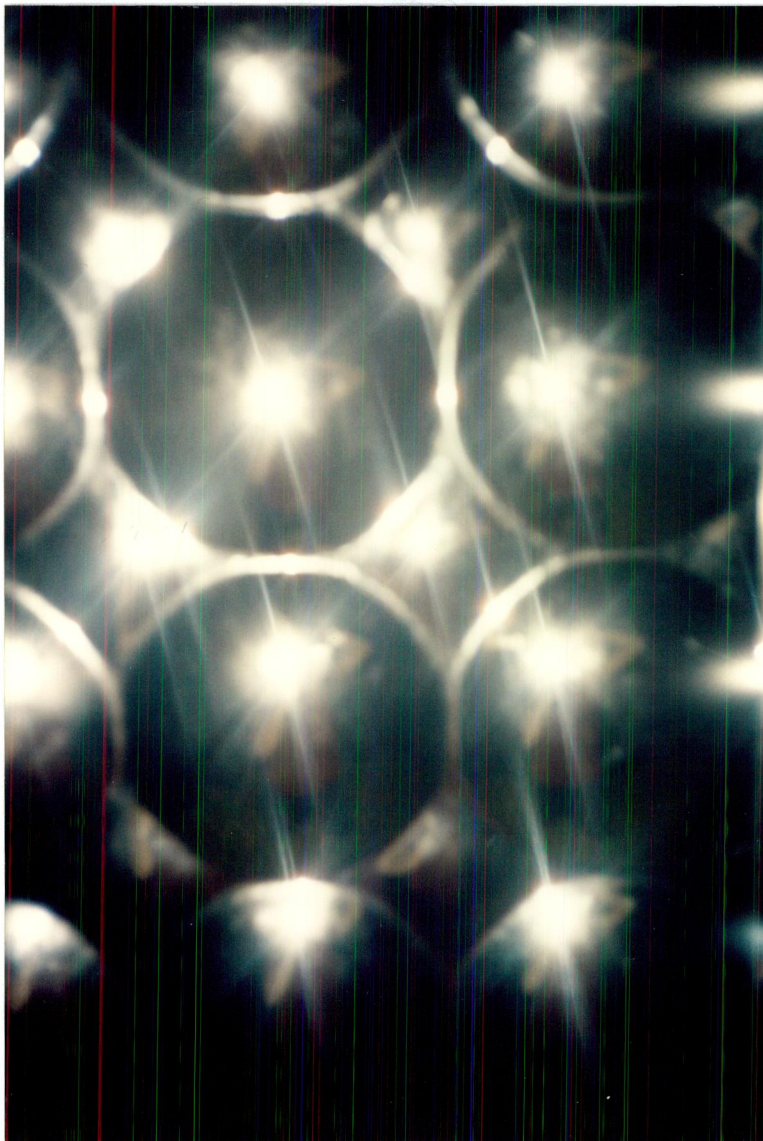


Fig. 13
Wall covering,
plastic- ball pit.



Fig. 14
'Diner' installation, Tunnel nightclub

These 'different environments' created in the nightclubs introduce an unusual atmosphere. Even more bizarre is a temporary installation in Tunnel which can be seen in figure 14. The installation is a mock diner-set-up. This area is enclosed by glass walls to keep the public at bay. The wall and counter are covered in a silver quilted material. This draws attention to the installation because of the way it catches the light. There are various props, such as tables and chairs, that you would expect to find in a diner. Even details such as salt cellars, dirty crockery and cutlery, a box of cornflakes, are taken care of. People are employed sometimes to sit down and walk about inside, pretending to be customers. It then becomes a dual installation and performance art piece. The whole concept is quite surreal and, as such, the designers have succeeded in creating another reality, another world, which is removed from the world of work.

Thus, these fantasy environments reveal with more subtlety another aspect of American society - a society which lives life in the fast lane. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine each aspect of American society, and how these elements are reflected within Peter Gaten's nightclubs. The aim of this piece of work is to get an overview of various different aspects of contemporary society. What is required is an international overview - not just an analysis related to one particular society. It seems appropriate, therefore, to refer to postmodernism at this point. It is considered to be a movement which has had an impact worldwide. The next chapter will examine how aspects of postmodernist thinking are reflected within the New York clubs.

Chapter Three

Nightclubs - A reflection of postmodernism

It has been discussed in the previous chapter how the interior design of my chosen nightclubs reflects aspects of American society. Many of the ideals and ways of behaving contained within this society have been influenced by postmodernist thought. This chapter will deal, specifically, with this aspect of society and how it is reflected within the interior design of the Palladium and Tunnel nightclubs, in particular.

To explain postmodernism, we can refer to David Harvey. He describes it as 'a sea-change in cultural as well as political-economic practices since around 1972' (Harvey, 1989, p.vii). This change was in the form of a reaction against modernism. Modernist thought was rational, there was one way of seeing things and doing things. An obsession with rules and plans characterised the movement. These ideas had much influence in the world of design. Designed objects had to be uncluttered in form. Pattern and ornamentation were eliminated, as were any references to past styles. Only forms which were essential to the function of an object were allowed. Thus, designed objects were spare and geometrical. Colour was neutral, generally, with an occasional primary. Postmodernism can, largely, be defined against modernism. It rejects the modernist belief in rationality. Therefore, as it is essentially non-rational, it is a mass of conflicting ideas and influences. The main idea behind postmodernist theory which changes everything is the realisation that there should not be one right way of doing things - of

performing tasks, of living in general. Harvey describes it as an "intense distrust of all universal or totalising discourses' (Harvey, 1989, p.9).

Having moved away from the modernist way of approaching design - where designed objects had to be purely functional - the gates have been left open and everything else has flooded in. Postmodernist design is eclectic. Inspiration can come from anywhere. Instead of a purely functional interior, there can be use of ornamentation and colour for their own sake. There can be a message underlying a design - a comment about a certain social issue or facet of life. An object could be poking fun at a certain person, piece of art or attitude. A series of objects could have a theme running through them.

An abundance of themes is particularly evident within the design of the Palladium. The design of the lobby takes water as its source of inspiration (fig.15). Entering it is like taking a voyage under the sea. It awash with various shades of blue. Shiny ultramarine paint creates the walls of the 'sea'. The carpet is a mid-blue colour with curved turquoise lines, which seem to be emulating waves. It is, in fact patterned after David Hockney's Los Angeles swimming pool. The use of lighting, especially creates a transparent watery effect.

Similarly, themes within interior design are evident in Tunnel. One of the strongest themes takes its inspiration from the industrial world. The actual building was previously a warehouse, which was built on the site of an old railway tunnel. The atmosphere which already existed in the building is not destroyed, but capitalised on. Wiring and pipes on the ceiling and walls are left uncovered(fig.16). There is use of industrial materials throughout :wire panels covering the stage(fig.17); metal cages for the dancers(fig.18);rubber for seating(fig.19); metal beams which support the building furniture made from old airducts(fig.12). If there is not enough metal around, an abundant use of silver fabrics and paint make up for this(fig.20). The necessary lighting and sound equipment are also in keeping with this industrial feeling.

In keeping with the hallmark of postmodernist thought that there are many ways of doing everything, there are also many different personalities and each person has various moods. The Palladium has catered for this by having different



Fig. 15
Foyer, Palladium nightclub



Fig. 16
Tunnel nightclub,
uncovered wiring
and pipes

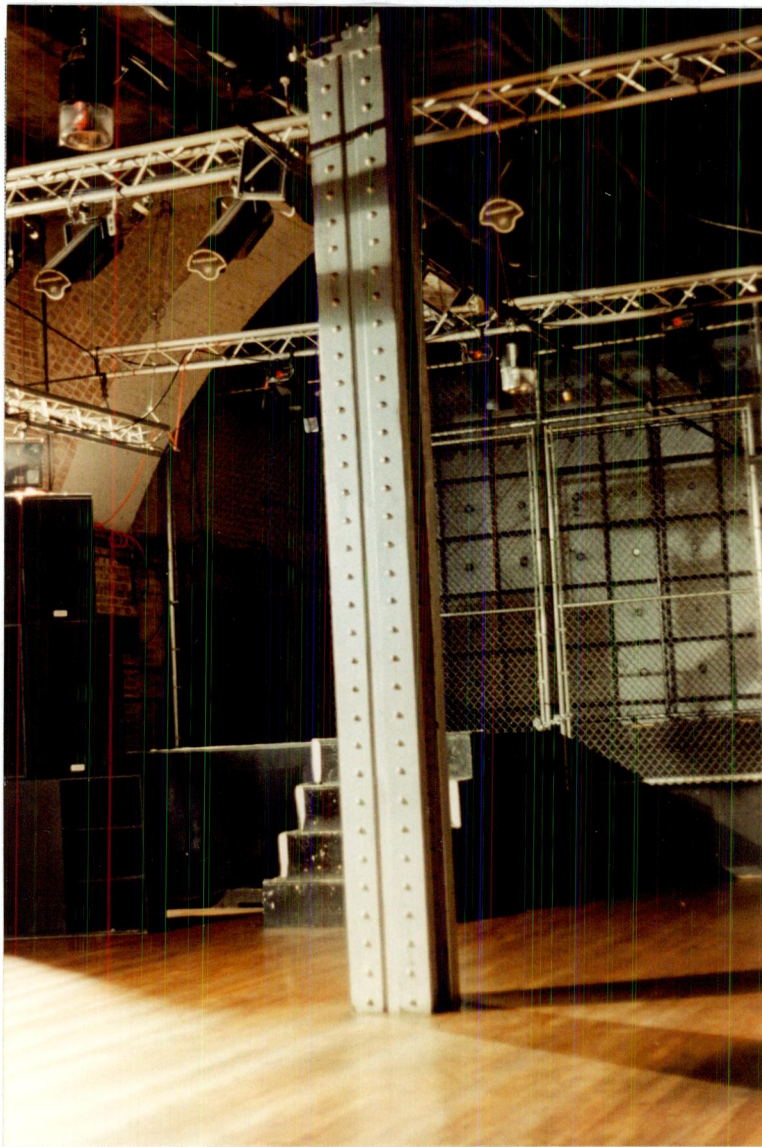


Fig. 17
Stage,
Tunnel nightclub,

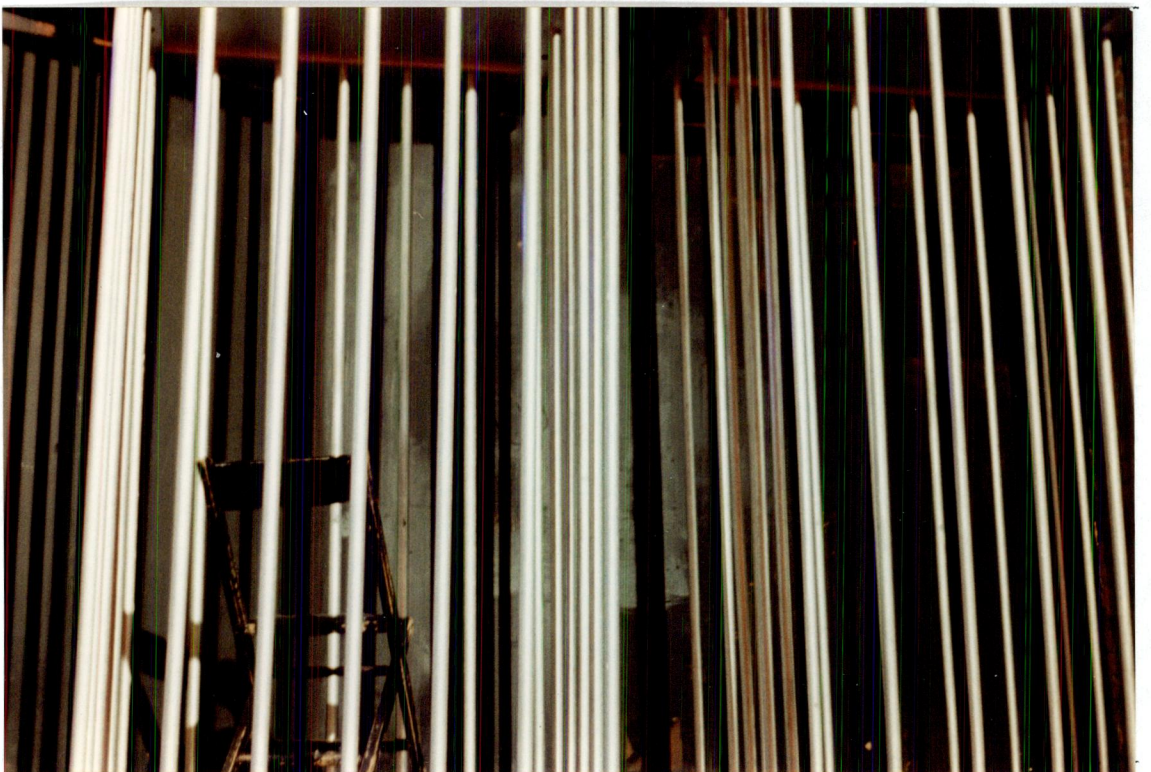


Fig. 18
Cage, Tunnel nightclub



Fig. 19
Black rubber seating, Tunnel nightclub



Fig. 20
Use of silver paint/
fabrics, Tunnel
nightclub

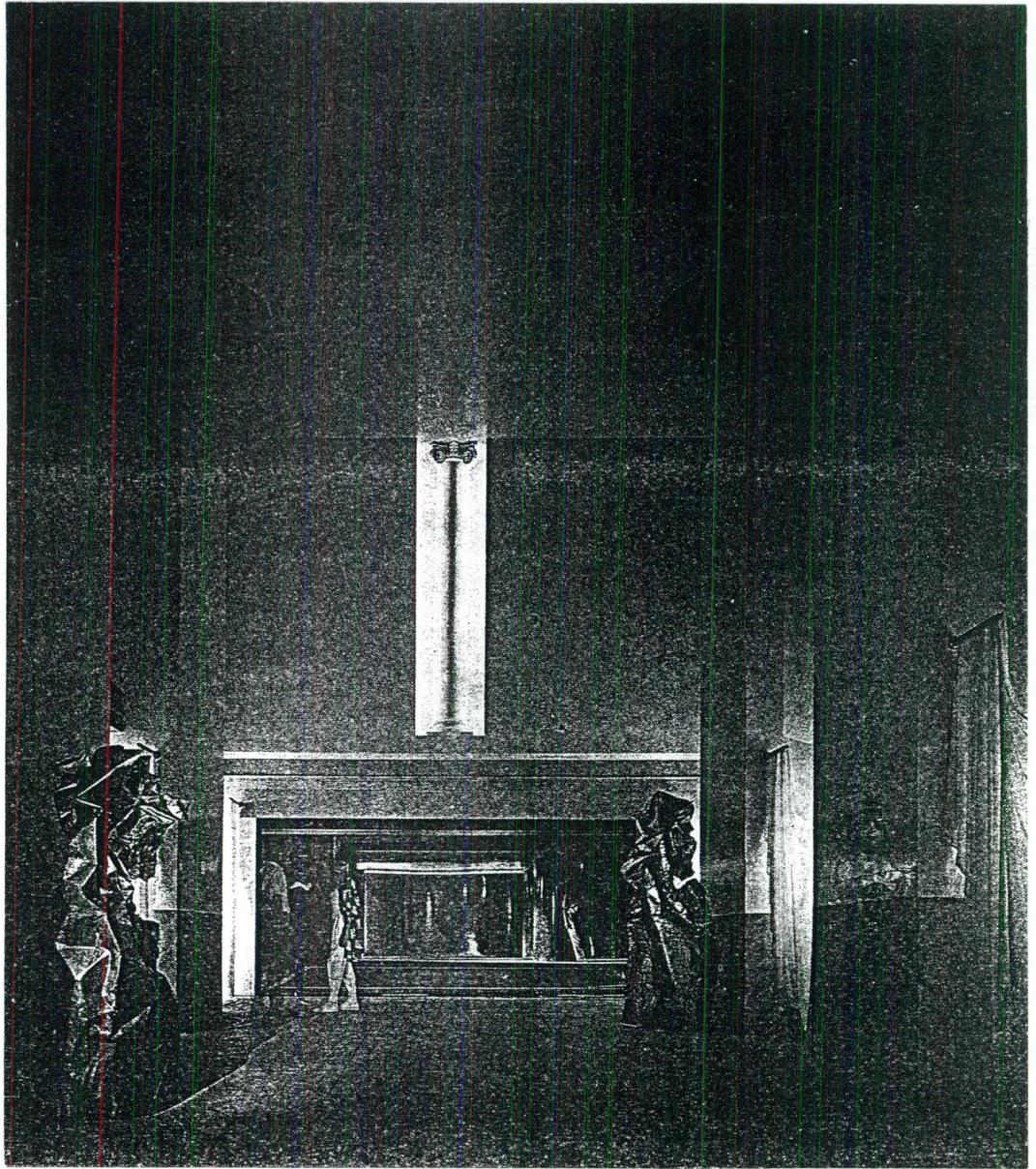


Fig. 21
Lobby, Palladium, nightclub

spaces with radically different decoration and atmospheres. "The goal in the Palladium was to separate individual parts from the whole of the building ... making many places within one place. (Fennen, "Electronic Cathedral", *Interiors*, Oct 88, p.128). Entering the building, we first experience the lobby(fig.21). It is a majestic white room with a high ceiling. White transparent fabric has been draped in places by fashion designer Norma Kamali. The fabric is lit from behind and the lightness and the airiness serves well in breaking up the monumental heavy space and easing the sharp division of the two-tone wall. In the picture shown, there is a temporary exhibition by sculptor Rosemarie Castoro. Her pieces are large indistinguishable shapes. They look like crumpled paper though are probably made from metal. They suggest mystery and other-worldliness. An ionic column - functionless, or so it seems - exists in the centre of one wall. It is lit from behind to highlight it - thus, introducing us to the duality of an old/new decor. This lobby was intended as a decompression chamber for regaining one's balance after the pandemonium of 14th Street in the world outside. Moving further into the club we plunge into the 'sea' referred to earlier before climbing the celestial 'stairway to heaven'(fig.22). Made from steel and hundreds of sandblasted circles of glass, it is lit from below. It is near-blinding in contrast to the subtler, moodier blue light of the foyer. The stairway looks very high-tec and space-age. You could almost imagine you were entering a space ship when you step onto it.

Already before even seeing a dance floor, bar or seating area we have passed through three separate worlds. There is something that everybody can appreciate. If this is not enough, there are two areas that are so stylistically different from the rest of the club that they could almost be separate clubs in themselves. The obsession with 'many places' has been carried to the extreme. Located in the basement is the Kenny Scharf room, decorated by the New York graffiti artist(fig.23). It is psychedelic, colourful and blatant, in comparison with the simple sophistication of the majority of the interior. The room is entered by a long tunnel, its walls covered with strips of fun fur alternating with mirrors(fig.24). The ceiling is painted in stripes. The overall look is Day-Glow. The room itself is a mass of colour and line - in a word 'confusion'. Practically no surface is left undecorated. The colourful, regular stripes of the floor contrast with the un-restrained use of spray paints elsewhere. Images include semi-abstract patterns - stars, spirals, dots, wavy lines, zig-zags, grids - and stylistic faces which look like comic book images.

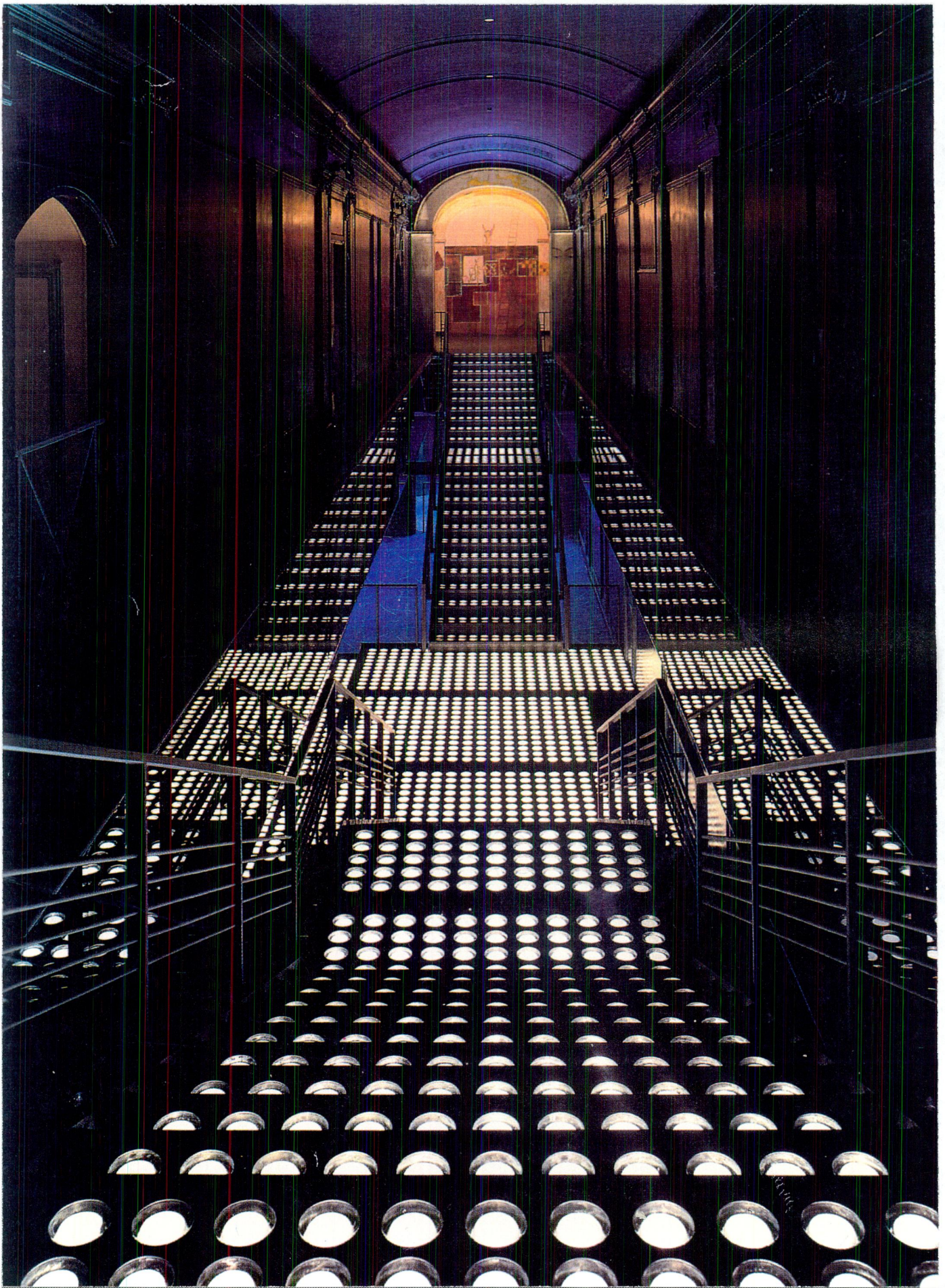


Fig. 22
'Stairway to Heaven', Palladium, nightclub

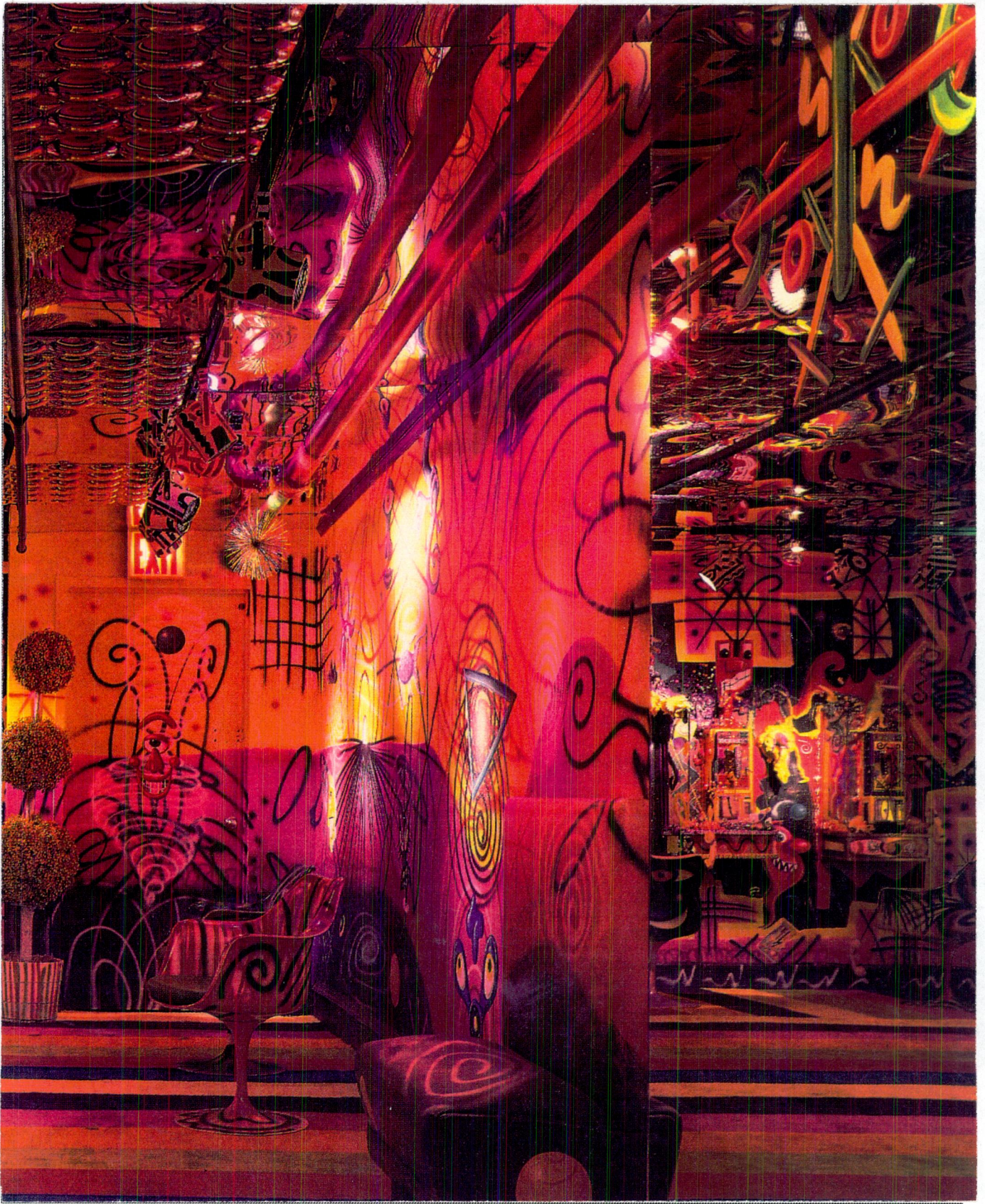


Fig. 23
'Kenny Scharf room', Palladium, nightclub

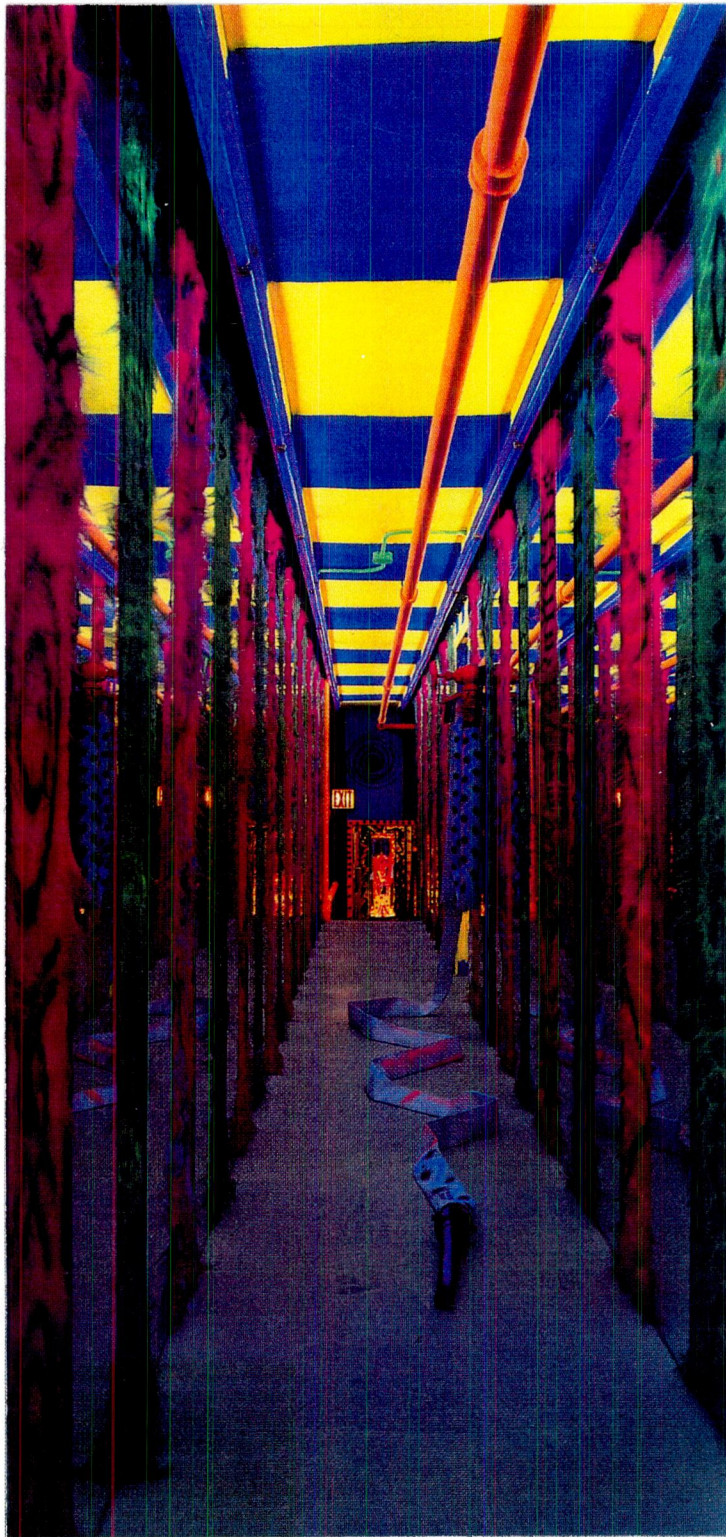


Fig. 24
Corridor to 'Kenny Scharf room', Palladium, nightclub

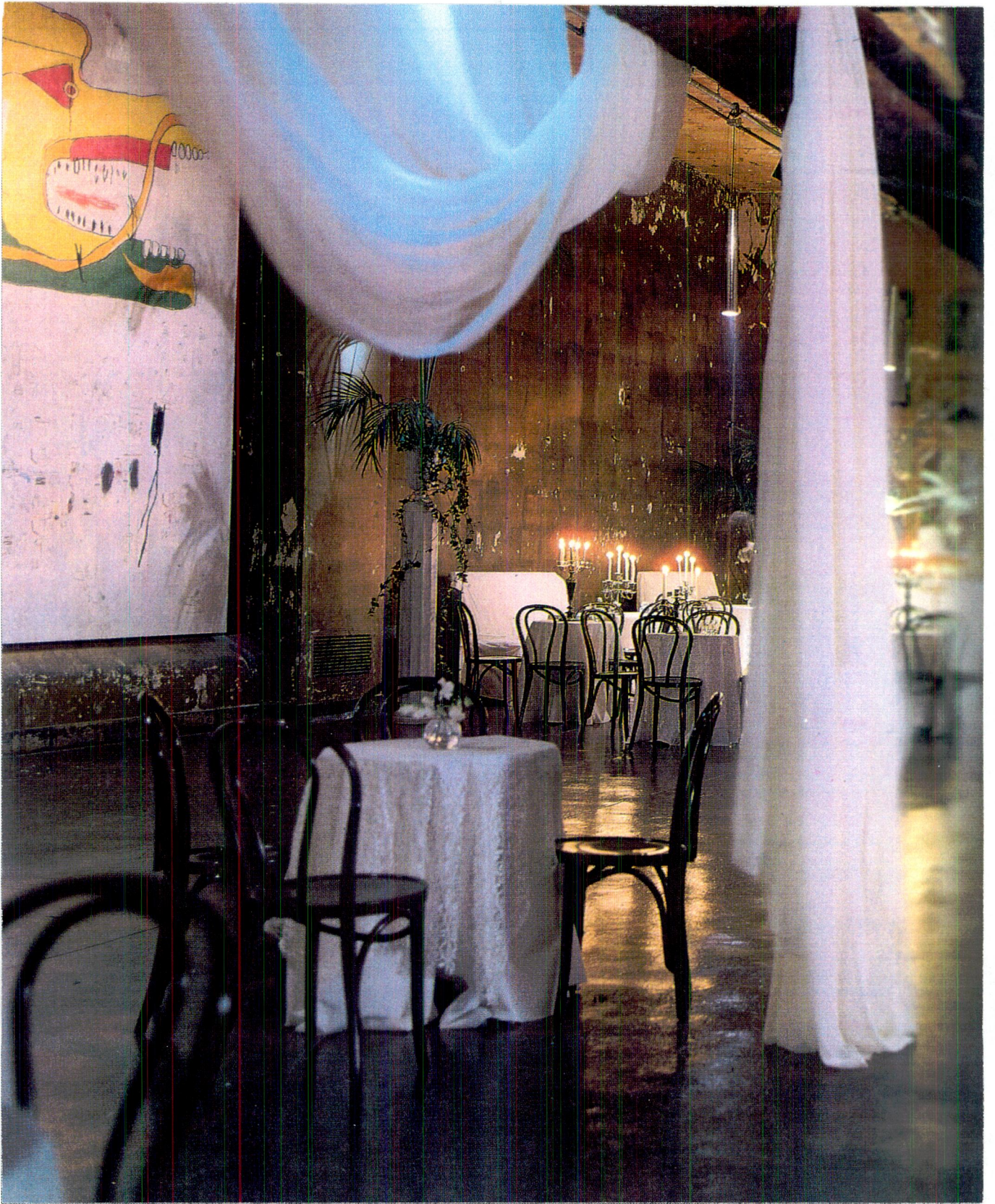


Fig. 25
Mike Todd room, Palladium, nightclub

The furniture used looks like old car and train seats and office furniture. However, clues to its past are almost obliterated with the graffiti. The crazy-mirror on the ceiling distorts the room - as if it doesn't need any more confusion.

The Mike Todd room, on the third floor, is as different from the Kenny Scharf room, as it is far away (fig.25). Unlike the Kenny Scharf room which is named after its interior decorator, this room is named after its former occupant - the director, Mike Todd. It is designed by Andree Putman who acted as the interior design consultant for the whole project. The area is set up like a restaurant, with old-style chairs, and tables with white cloths and vases of flowers on top of them. It is all reminiscent of a cabaret scene, partly due to the layout of the room, but also to the grandeur and old-world feeling that is created. An air of age exists thanks to Robert Isabell, a florist, who searched junk shops for the broken antique mirrors, bent candelabras and torn tablecloths. Huge amounts of white lace, a very traditional fabric, are draped over corroded beams. Peeling paint and crumbling plasterwork are also left untouched. Even though the main atmosphere being created is one of rusticity, a fifties style bar and several loud, brash, stylistic, modern paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat have to be added in just to be truly eclectic - one of the hallmarks of the postmodernist design.

We can see in the Mike Todd room tributes to different periods. This can be related to the fundamental shift in thinking that accompanies postmodernism - that there is no one way of doing things. This "peculiar treatment of the past" also results, as Harvey claims, from "a breakdown of the temporal order of things".

Eschewing the idea of progress, postmodernism abandons all sense of historical continuity and memory, while simultaneously developing an incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present. Postmodernist architecture, for example, takes bits and pieces from the past quite eclectically and mixes them together at will. (Harvey, 1989, p.54).

This plundering of history can be seen everywhere within the interior of the Palladium. The most obvious materialisation of this characteristic is positioning a nightclub in a piece of architecture built in 1926. The Academy of Music building has had many different functions - as an opera house, a ballroom, a theatre and



Fig. 26
Facade, Palladium nightclub



Fig. 27
Staircase, Palladium nightclub

a rock concert hall - during the century. Therefore the memory of these previous incarnations are contained within the Palladium. Not only this, but much of the original architecture and ornamental details have been left untouched.

The first thing you could possibly see, the facade, was not transformed by the designers (fig.26). It is surprising that it fits perfectly with the building's present use, while still referring to the past. A figure from Ancient Greece or Rome pulls back the curtains on one side of the mural, revealing the activity beyond. Figures of people playing instruments which are painted on the wall almost look like people dancing. Spotlights on these performers could almost be disco lights, and a painted image of fire or mist could be likened to the dry ice found in night-clubs. The mural is very lively and full of action reflecting the present activities inside.

Within the club the old vs. new theme is highlighted by juxtaposing original details with ones that are contemporary, some of which even seem to look to the future. The newly built structures use materials which are obviously modern, such as wood, which have always been available. Thus, it is more apparent which structures are old and which are new. For example, the cold hard steel and glass of the 'stairway to Heaven' are the opposite of the organic warm wood panelling on either side (fig.22). The harsh lighting of the glass discs contrasts with the subtle shadows on the walls. The sharp lines of the steps and rails emphasise how the ceiling is gently arched. Although built recently, the stairway is quite futuristic looking, thus bringing another time period into the equation. There is a further smaller staircase which brings you from the second to the third floor (fig.27). It is set side by side with ornamentation from a previous era. This decoration is very organic, depicting flowers, leaves and other meandering forms. A round section in the midst of this holds a painting of woman - the epitome of curvaceousness and softness. The straight lines of the stairs cut across the dense ornamentation, two different worlds fusing in the process. Gold - a colour associated with history - in the form of paint or gold leaf, has been liberally applied to the old architecture. Silver - a colour of modernity - is present in the metal of the stairs. In the picture shown, the two features are lit separately with yellow and blue lights - warm and cold - to heighten this contrast. It is the obvious contrasts which are being made which bring attention to the different time periods which exist within



Fig. 28
Dancefloor, Palladium, nightclub

the decor. Similarly, the original balcony area, with its curved rows of seats, is still in existence. This lies close to the mezzanine bar, which glows with neon. The accompanying seating area is scattered with newly designed furniture, by Andree Putman. One can also look down onto the high-tec. dance floor from here(fig.28). New and old is contained in every glance taken within the club, and, thus, the postmodernist influence is also seen within every glance.

In essence, a postmodern influence can be seen in almost any aspect of the interior design of Gatiens nightclubs. This is because postmodernism instructs us "to prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity" (Foucault quoted in Harvey, 1989, p.44). As the interior design of each of these clubs is eclectic, they follow this fundamental of postmodernity. This celebration of 'difference over uniformity' may be the reason why subcultures can be seen to have such an overt influence over nightclubs in contemporary times. The final chapter will discuss this influence.

Chapter Four

Nightclubs - A reflection of subcultures.

Like a mirror, nightclubs reflect aspects of our society - one particular group within this society more than others, subcultures. More than any other section of the population, subcultures have the power to influence mainstream nightlife. To explain briefly, this is because nightlife is an escape from the orders and rules of society. Subcultures are a reaction against the same order. Therefore, the two must interconnect and influence one another in some way. This chapter will discuss in more detail why subcultures have the power to influence mainstream nightlife. Examples will be given of how they have influenced forms of nightlife and the interior design of venues catering to such entertainment. Reference will be made to the New York nightclubs which this thesis is focusing on, and how this relates to them.

Before defining subcultures, one must first understand the concept of culture. In Dick Hebdige's book, *Subculture - The Meaning of Style*, he quotes Arnold and Williams, placing before us two possible definitions. According to Arnold, culture refers to "the best that has been thought and said in the world". (Hebdige, 1979, p.6). The other definition suggests not only this but much more. Williams thinks of it as "a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour" (Hebdige, 1979, p.6). As subcultures are unlikely to be associated with so-called high-culture, it is appropriate for the purposes of the thesis

to agree with the second definition.

Therefore, culture can be seen to refer to a whole way of life. The prefix 'sub'-suggests being part of something larger - like with the word 'sub-set'. Therefore, applying this to the word 'subculture' it explains that it is a group within a larger culture. The Oxford dictionary defines subcultures as groups whose beliefs and behaviour are at variance with mainstream society(Sykes, 1984, p.1945).

Since subcultures go against mainstream thinking, how can they influence it? The main reason is that society as a whole must change. Often new conditions are forced on it by changes in technology, wars or , simply, boredom. Its old value systems and behavioural patterns no longer apply. For the larger society to change, it must step outside itself, review the situation and leave itself open to other influences. Subcultures are groups which have explored some of the other options available. Therefore, mainstream society often takes on board aspects of subcultural behaviour or beliefs. So, ultimately, the subculture becomes more incorporated into the larger group.

Although the subculture becomes more incorporated into the larger group, as stated previously, the mainstream cannot take on board these influences just as they are - for the same reasons that these groups were rejected in the first place. Either it just incorporates aspects of behaviour or style, or the influences become more of a surface trend than a true belief. To illustrate this reference can be made to the punk movement. Originally, youths ripped their T-shirts, wrote on them and draped studded belts and toilet chains around themselves. This do-it-yourself principle boldly diverted from the larger society's ideas of taste. Later, retailers sold them ready-distressed clothing. Punks wished to disassociate themselves from the establishment. So, by buying clothes from retailers, who were part of this establishment, they were not staying true to their principles. They were joining the mainstream. As Helen Rees puts it; "The innovation feeds back into the mainstream (Rees, 1986, p.4). Because the clothing was no longer D.I.Y. it had lost its original connotations, and was therefore acceptable to mainstream society.

Nightlife, and nightclubs in particular, are open to change, as they provide

the spontaneity in life. In fact, nightclubs are dependant on keeping up with new trends. They are commercial ventures, selling style and attitude. This style and attitude is now considered as important a commodity as the alcohol being sold within these clubs. Subcultures greatest form of expression is through style. Style is used as 'a form of refusal' (Hebdige, 1979, p.2), a means of making a statement. Subcultures take commodities and use them in a differnt way than originally intended, thus they become associated with subversion, for example, within the punk movement, binliners, pins and toilet chains were used to create clothing. Binliners, toilet chains and some of the other objects which the punks appropriated had not ever been associated with clothing. They would have been connected more so with waste disposal. By using these objects in such a vastly different manner, the punks portrayed their anti-establishment views. Thus, if nightclubs are searching for a different style or attitude, to sell to the general public, many are available within subcultures. Another reason why subcultural style is easily incorporated into nightclubs is because of the association of subcultures with leisure, excitement and passion. Denied expression within society's regimented framework, subcultures often turn more to the area of nightlife, which allows for more freedom of expression.

One subculture which has many associations with nightlife is gay culture. Homosexuality has been thought of in the past as unnatural or an affront to God, and has been condemned by the larger culture. This situation has changed a lot as society has become more open to groups which are different. However, many gay people still hide their true sexuality or only express it within gay circles. Thus ,to a large extent ,this group is still underground and can still be considered a sub-culture.

The actual form of entertainment that exists within Tunnel, Limelight, Palladium and Club U.S.A. reflects aspects of gay culture. Both the music which is played and the rituals which are enacted in these four clubs and in clubs world-wide is a development of the seventies 'disco'. Disco has been described in *The Face* as "... an underground celebration of gay life and libido which washed over straight, mainstream existance like a tidal wave" (Toop, "Disco", *The Face*, V.2 Sept. '92, p.53). Disco has particularly strong connections with New York. The gay community is very powerful in this city. It possesses the largest openly gay

population of any city in the world, even bigger than San Francisco. Disco goes hand in hand with the origins of the gay liberation movement which started in New York. A police raid on the Stonewall pub, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, was the spark that led homosexuals to fight for their rights. The raid resulted in a three day riot between the police and the occupants of the pub. This was the first instance when gay people had asserted themselves and they continued to do so from then on. This new found liberation resulted in much celebration and partying (Browning, 1994, p.53). It was these parties which crossed over into the mainstream as disco. If we refer to "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real" - a song by Sylvester, a gay singer of the seventies - we can get an idea of what was happening at these gay parties and subsequently at disco's. "When we're up and dancing on the floor, darling, and I feel like I need somemore, and I feel your body close to mine and I know my love its about that time...". The gay parties revolved around dancing. Eclectic mixes of danceable black music was played. (Toop, "Disco" *The Face*, V.2 Sept '92, p.56). This vogue for 'strutting your stuff' on the dance-floor translated into disco. The black artist much revered at the time by most homosexuals - singers such as Diana Ross, Donna Summer, Sylvester and Sister Sledge - and also white artists playing music inspired by black dance - bands such as the Bee Gees and Abba - became synonomous with mainstream dance music and the disco scene. If we look again to the words of Sylvester's song it is obvious that these gay celebrations were also very much associated with sexual activity. "Disco... could (also) pop out the tightest emotional and sexual blocks" (Toop, "Disco", *The Face*, V.2 Sept. 1992, p.54). It was the complete style of these underground gay parteies which translated into disco. Gay culture is very glamorous and fantasy based. The drag queen embodies this style. To *The Face* photographer Andrew MacPherson, drag queens are "the most brilliant celebration of beauty, style, seduction, dressing up, having fun and looking amazing". (Raphael, "New York is a Drag", *The Face*, Vol. 2, no.37, Oct. 1991, p.111). If we look at one of his photographs of a drag queen(fig.29), we can see some of the elements which crossed over into the setting of the disco, and also the fashions worn at discos. We can see a hat made from sequins on the 'queen's' head and various other metallic, sparkly, tacky accessories adorning the body. The interiors of discos were likewise decorated with metallic and sparkly objects such as mirrorballs - which reflect light all around a room, thus, making everything look like it has glitter on it. The coloured disco lights were another part of the interior which made every-



Fig. 29
Drag queen, gay pride march 1991, NY



Fig. 30
Drag queen, gay pride march 1991, NY



Fig. 31
Nineties recreation of disco interior and fashions

thing look vibrant and glamorous. Figure 31 depicts a nineties recreation of the disco interior and fashions. Compare the flamboyant, sexy, sparkly attire of the girls to what the drag queen is wearing in figure 30 is wearing. There is no great difference between the two outfits. Fabrics that would have been worn at the Seventies disco were lurex, lycra, metallics and sequinned fabrics, all of which are often worn by drag queens because of their obvious glamour.

If we compare the Seventies disco to the form of entertainment which now exists in clubs such as Tunnel, Palladium, Limelight and Club U.S.A., we can see that nothing has changed drastically. Although styles of music, dance and fashion have been constantly evolving since the Seventies, the nightclub is still a place of flamboyance and fantasy. People still make a special effort to dress up and look glamorous when they go to clubs. It is obvious that the influence of the gay subculture still lives on.

There are certain elements which are associated with gay culture which were not reflected in the nightclub of the Seventies, but which we can see reflected in the New York clubs. These elements of gay culture are of a more obviously sexual and fetishistic nature. Ted Polhemus explains in the book *Street Style* that the word fetish is used in relation to objects which possess a sexual power which can rival or eclipse the erotic power of the human body. Essentially any object can provide a fetishistic attraction to a person (Polhemus, 1995, p. 103). However, certain objects or styles of dress are considered fetishistic. Fabrics like rubber, P.V.C., or leather, and details on clothing, such as metal studs and lacing, are all thought of as fetishistic. Other objects such as whips, handcuffs, stiletto heels and stockings with suspenders, also come under this category. Often styles of dress which include a number of these fabrics or details are referred to as bondage gear. Bondage gear is not confined to the gay subculture. Ted Polhemus refers to people who wear such 'kinky' clothing as 'Pervs'. He defines this group of people as a subculture. He also explains that many of these fetishistic objects have "lost all vestiges of stigma" (Polhemus, 1995, p.105). Therefore it is difficult to say whether this group can be considered a subculture in today's society. However for the purposes of this thesis, they will remain a subculture. The following section will now analyse how the interior design of the four clubs that have been chosen reflect these elements of the gay and Perv subcultures.

Sexuality, particularly forms which have been considered kinky or deviant in the past, takes the prize for the most obvious theme within the design of Club U.S.A.. We can see a direct reference to homosexuality in the women's toilets. Larger - than - life photos depict two naked women in an embrace. Moving into the main area of the club - where the dancefloor is - we can see Japanese lettering emblazoned on the walls. These words translate into the English words ' sex change ' . This reference to sexual ambiguity extends the theme of sexual matters which don't fit in with the norm. As soon as you walk into the club, in fact, the first visible thing - the dance floor bar - introduces this theme(fig.32). Trimming the bar is a strip of neon light, with words such as ' sex ' and ' adult books ' printed on it. Surrounding the top of the bar are numerous pornographic magazines - for both a gay and straight audience - with titles such as ' Whip ' and 'Nasty ' . These names are references to sado masochism. This type of sexual activity often involves such fetishistic objects as handcuffs and whips, which were mentioned earlier.

A figure which seems to embody sado-masochism is a huge figure of a woman painted on a board - a dominatrix (fig. 33). This name comes from the word dominate. This woman looks powerful and intimidating, not weak and passive. She exudes sexuality. Men have always been thought of as more sexually dominant than women. However this woman looks like she would be the person more in control within any couple. If we compare what she is wearing to the woman in figure 34, we can see that the garments are very similar. Figure 34 is an illustration taken from Ted Polhemus' book. He describes the rubber and P.V.C. garments as fetishistic. He goes on to say that ;

the Pervs propose a way round the contemporary impasse of male/female power struggles by substituting instead Sub(missive)/Dom(inant) roles which are not specifically defined by gender.

(Polhemus, 1995, p.105)

The dominatrix in Club U.S.A. seems to fit in with this description of Perv behaviour. She also fits in with a sado - masochistic image as she is holding a chainsaw - a weapon that can cause pain.

The same theme even continues through to some of the furniture. One par-



Fig. 32
Dancefloor bar, Club USA



Fig. 35
Chair, Club USA

ticular chair is loosely based on the form of a human body crossed with the shape of a dentists chair (fig. 35). Thus it incorporates both the concept of somebody causing you pain, and having control over you - because of the difficulty involved in moving out of a dentists chair. Made from black P.V.C. and laced down the side, it is using materials and motifs associated with bondage clothing. The choice of Jean Paul Gaultier, as furniture designer, was probably well considered. Being a well - known male designer who has a penchant for wearing short skirts, and, having designed kinky stage clothing for Madonna - the ultimate in dominant women who explores all her sexual fantasies, whether with men or women - he fits in well with the mood of the club.

The designers of the club also try to re- create the ambiance of the red - light district within the club, an area which is part of the sleazy underworld. The dancefloor area has a neon sign which reads 'Girls, Girls, Girls' suspended from the ceiling (fig. 7) - a reference to all the strip joints and pornographic movie theatres further up Manhattan, around 34th street. For those who like to participate more on their night out, peep - show booths are provided (fig. 8). They contain T.V. screens with lists of options displayed of what one can presumably view.

As we can see from the photographs taken in Club U.S.A., there is an extremely graphic reflection of the Perv and gay subcultures. References are not as overt within the other New York clubs. In Tunnel we can see subtle references being made by the choice of materials used in the seating. Silver leather and black rubber - both considered fetishistic fabrics - are used in the sofas in conjunction with a bondage - type lacing detail. There are also several cages in Tunnel and Limelight where half - naked men and women dance seductively (fig. 36). These cages introduce ideas of entrapment and voyeurism, which have bizarre sexual undertones.

Another subculture which has often been thought of as passionate, and has been associated with nightlife, is black culture. To make a generalisation, the white culture has, down through history, considered itself superior to black culture. In the past, ethnic cultures have been looked upon as primitive and unrestrained, possessing a different value system. It is only recently that Black Rights have been taken into consideration, and this culture has become incorporated into

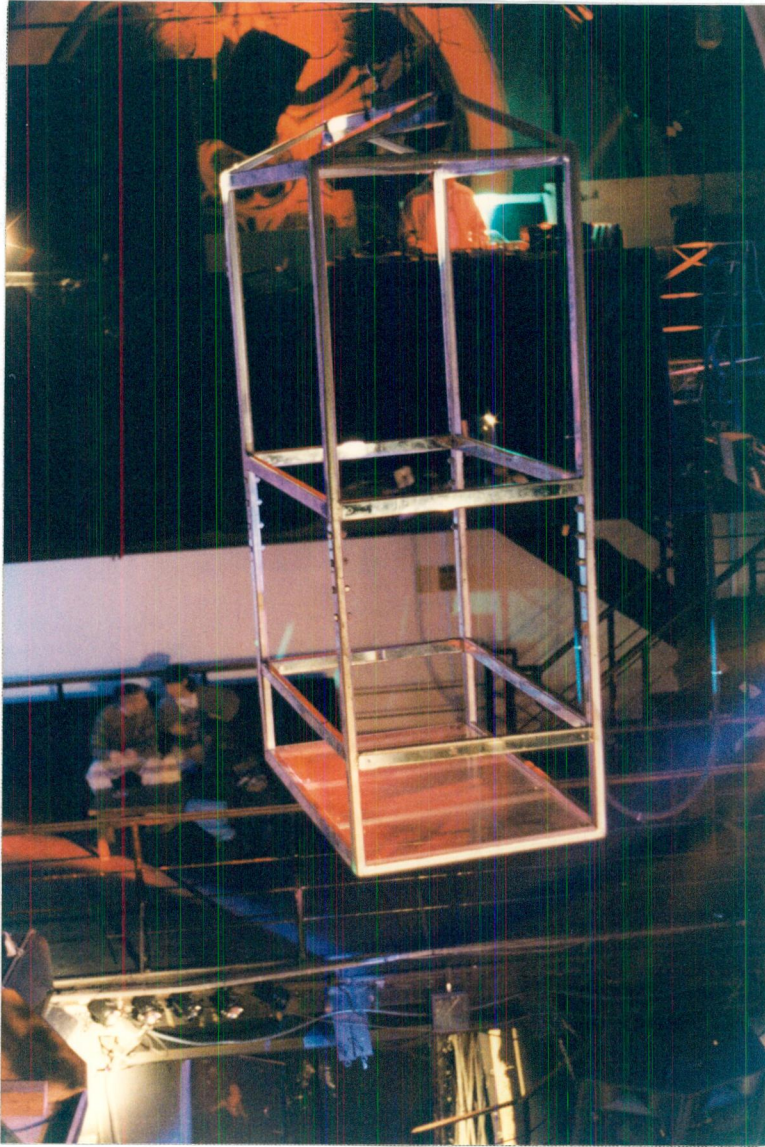


Fig. 36
Cage suspended in Limelight

the larger society. However, for the purposes of this thesis, black culture will still be considered a subculture. We can discern elements of black culture in most major forms of popular music and dance that have existed throughout the twentieth century. Michael Brake, in fact, refers to American popular music as black music (Brake, 1985, p.124). So, as such, the form of entertainment which exists today - in nightclubs such as The Palladium, Tunnel, Limelight and Club U.S.A. - would not have come to be without these influences. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the impact that black culture has had on popular music throughout the twentieth century up to the present day.

Referring back to one of the subjects discussed in chapter one, the origins of the nightclub, we can see reflections of ethnic cultures contained in this new form of entertainment. Most of the dances that entertainers such as Irene and Vernon Castle performed had black or Latin origins. Even though they maintained the tango they performed had come from Europe, they had to admit that its origins were Latin, Argentinian, to be precise (Erenberg, 1981, p.163). Dances were not the only form of expression to be appropriated from black culture. The music of this culture also became popular. The 'coon' song encapsulated changing stereotypes of black people - from the 'happy darky' to the 'invidious coon' (Erenberg, 1981, p. 73). From these humble beginnings, many other types of black music such as ragtime, blues and jazz became popular with a white audience "With its roots deep in black culture, jazz... offered white musicians and audiences an outlet from their own particular cultures" (Erenberg, 1981, p.251). This influence of black culture on white stretched so far that white New Yorkers even began to visit Harlem, a coloured district of Manhattan, to socialise. Victorian values were gradually becoming obsolete and, with the advent of the Second World War, elements in society changed. Enjoyment became part of the established society and one area which was looked to was that of the primitive and unrestrained. The references to black culture were not always overt, however, as this group was still considered outside the larger society.

The next major impact that ethnic music, and consequently dance, had on mainstream culture was related to Rock and Roll. Michael Brake explains in *Comparative Youth Culture* how this form of music turned into a mainstream phenomenon. Rock and Roll was a mutation of Rhythm and Blues which included

“the Gospel beat” and “the Blues sexuality” to become a major dance music. It had been made popular among black audiences by singers such as Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry and Little Richard. However, it was not until a white man, Elvis Presley, took up these black sounds and sensual movements that Rock and roll really became popular (Brake, 1985, p.125)

Even today, this influence on black music and dance on mainstream music continues. Today, however, boundaries between what is white music and what is black music have become less apparent, and ethnic artists appeal to as wide an audience as white artists do. This reveals how divisions are continuing to ease between different races and cultures. One category of music which has been extremely popular worldwide in the last year or two is Acid Jazz. It is played both by black artists such as US 3 and Mc Solar and white performers such as Jamiroquai and Mother Earth. It has even been taken up by Irish artists such as Louis Stewart. US 3 have, in fact, sampled parts of compositions by jazz musicians who were signed to the legendary Blue Note jazz label. Thus, the jazz music of the first half of the twentieth century is more than just a source of inspiration. It is actually incorporated into their music. Acid Jazz is extremely popular in contemporary clubs such as the four New York clubs. Black music has always gone hand in hand with dance - from the dances performed in the early twentieth century nightclub, to the sensual movements of Rock and Roll, to Acid Jazz in the nineties. black music and dance are also inseparable from the nightclub scene. Therefore, reflections of the black subculture are found in nightclubs worldwide, not just in the Palladium, Limelight, Tunnel and Club U.S.A..

So, we have seen that entertainment would not be as it is today without subcultures. Although they, traditionally, occupy a marginal position within society, they also hold a position of importance because of their difference. This difference, apart from having influenced the form of entertainment within Gatién's clubs, is also used directly within as a selling tool. The shock value of subcultures - which is apparent in the fetishistic theme of Club U.S.A. - can be used very effectively to sell commodities.

Conclusion

Hopefully, it has been made clear within this thesis that nightlife possesses a huge potential to reflect aspects of our society. Nightlife is often associated with the supposed 'darker' side of human nature - with our sexuality and our morality, or lack of it. Therefore it is a good area for analysis. By examining this area, which is supposed to provide freedom within our lives, we can analyse how free we actually are.

It has been seen in chapter one that there were many constraints on people in Victorian times. Respectability was equated with a lack of freedom. There was relatively little freedom of expression, whether through words or through actions. This genteel behaviour had been reflected in the forms of socialising of respectable members of society - in the formal parties and visits to the theatre. The nightclub - the new form of entertainment - reflected how this society had become more relaxed, and how barriers between different groups were being broken down - between men and women; blacks and whites.

Again, in comparing the nightclub of the early twentieth century to the contemporary nightclub, we can see that society has become even less concerned with rules and regulations. This is revealed through the impact that subcultures have had on nightlife. As subcultures are sometimes looked down on for being different from mainstream society, the extent to which they have an influence on mainstream nightlife reveals much about the society of the time. If we refer back to the chapter on subcultures, we can see that black culture -which can, without doubt, be considered a subculture at that particular time in history - was looked to for inspiration in the nightlife revolution. The genteel members of society were striving to become more relaxed socially and personally. They proceeded to look

to what they considered a more primitive and unrestrained group within society. However, references to black culture were not always overt - it was denied that the new dance steps had ethnic origins. This reveals that, despite all the efforts to change, the society was taking it slowly. However, in today's world, references to subcultures, within forms of entertainment or the interior design of nightclubs, are flaunted. This suggests that these subcultures are not considered as taboo any more. In fact, can they even be considered subcultures? Within Club U.S.A., references to gay culture and to sexuality in general, seem to be used for their shock value. These conspicuous references seem to tell us that society is not quite as relaxed as it likes to think it is regarding the area of sexuality. Whereas, references to subcultures were hidden, to a large extent, at the beginning of the century, they are now highlighted, which also suggests a slight unease - although we can still see much progression within this society.

In general we can see a celebration of every aspect of life in today's society - this is reflected in the New York nightclubs. Things do not seem to be considered 'good' or 'bad' anymore. Subcultural groups are not pushed to one side anymore for being different. Their difference is celebrated. The result of this is that it is difficult to say whether they can be defined as subcultures anymore. There is no one way of doing things. This is related to postmodernist thinking. Tributes are paid to every aspect of society and to every period within time. There is an appreciation of the past in today's society - an acknowledgement of all the developments which have taken place within society recently. There have, particularly, been many changes within society during the twentieth century. These may have been spurred on by the wealth of technological developments which have occurred in recent times. These changes must also attribute much to the two World Wars. These were horrific events which shocked the world into re-thinking their values and realising the enormous power for destruction that the human race has. This realisation - that the world could be destroyed instantly by a bomb, may have led to more of an appreciation for the past. It also makes the individual realise that life can be short and, therefore, one must live it to the full. We can see in today's world this celebration of life - both its fantasy aspects and its more realistic aspects - this is contained within the New York nightclubs.

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