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**National College of Art and Design**  
Faculty of Design  
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**Derivative or Innovative ?  
The Design of the POD Nightclub, Dublin.**

by

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2001 by

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Sir, - Mr. Colm O Lochlainn, in suggesting (November 5th) that Harcourt Street station should be turned into a theatre, displays the amateur's pathetic faith in common sense. These imaginative projects for the conversion of a railway station into something else - concert hall, theatre, university buildings, or whatever else this proud capital city may currently stand in need of - must and will come to naught at the hands of the experts. No professional architect would have the slightest difficulty, or a moments hesitation in demonstrating that it would cost far more to effect the metamorphosis than to build anew, and that the result would be much less satisfactory. Besides, is it really consistent with our dignity as citizens of one of the world's better known cities that we should relegate the muses to disused railway termini ?

D.P.R.

Foxrock, Co.Dublin.

( The Irish Times , 5 November 1958)



## INTRODUCTION

The young people that go to the *POD* are the most beautiful in Dublin, tanned and slim and self-absorbed, and they dance around lightly, with expensive bottles of designer beer clutched in their hands, while the stunningly loud House and Garage music pounds out of huge speakers. They can't hear each other speak, but then, they don't need to. They communicate by wiggling their hips and waving their arms in the air. They're the most stylish people in town (Gallagher, 1994, p.B1).

This thesis will analyse the design of the *POD* nightclub, focussing on the interior design, the furniture, the design of the services, the lighting, the decoration and ornamentation and the graphic design. It will focus on its influences, and will illustrate how the concept of the designer nightclub has brought an appreciation to the people of Dublin. It will compare and contrast its elements to the works of designers such as Philippe Starck, Alfredo Arribas and to the design boom in Barcelona in general, from where it has derived a lot of its inspiration.

It will pose the question as to whether the club is derivative or innovative. It will argue that the club is a direct copy, deriving its elements from an assortment of designer clubs in Barcelona combined with Philippe Starck ideas and designs, but at the same time, the *POD* has won the *Disco and Club International Magazine* awards for its design, its sound system, and its opening night amongst others. It has also won over the hearts of its



countless regular customers. So, the argument could just as easily sway to the clever use of existing design in this particular environment, (i.e. a derelict vault of a disused railway station), to bring to the attention of an Irish audience, (the vast majority of whom, would not have been exposed such a design experience as in Barcelona), the concept of the designer nightclub.

Before analysing the interior in depth, a brief history of the building itself will be given from its opening in 1859 to its closure, almost one hundred years later in 1958.

Today's nightclubs are very sophisticated in the technology employed and materials used, and reflect the society in which we live. However, with regard to the rate of the development of these designs, Ireland seems to have been somewhat left behind, until recently when the *POD* brought a totally new meaning of the word nightclub to the people of Dublin in the converted vaults of the old Harcourt Street railway station.

John Reynolds (Fig. 1.), the owner of the *POD* opened the club after a fruitless weekend in Dublin when he and some of his friends, who had returned home from London were refused admission in a number of Dublin clubs for not being regulars. Even though they were dressed in hundreds of pounds worth of designer clothes and were heavily involved in the nightclub scene in London, having managed some of the best clubs such as the *London Empire* and the *Ministry of Sound* it was all to no avail.





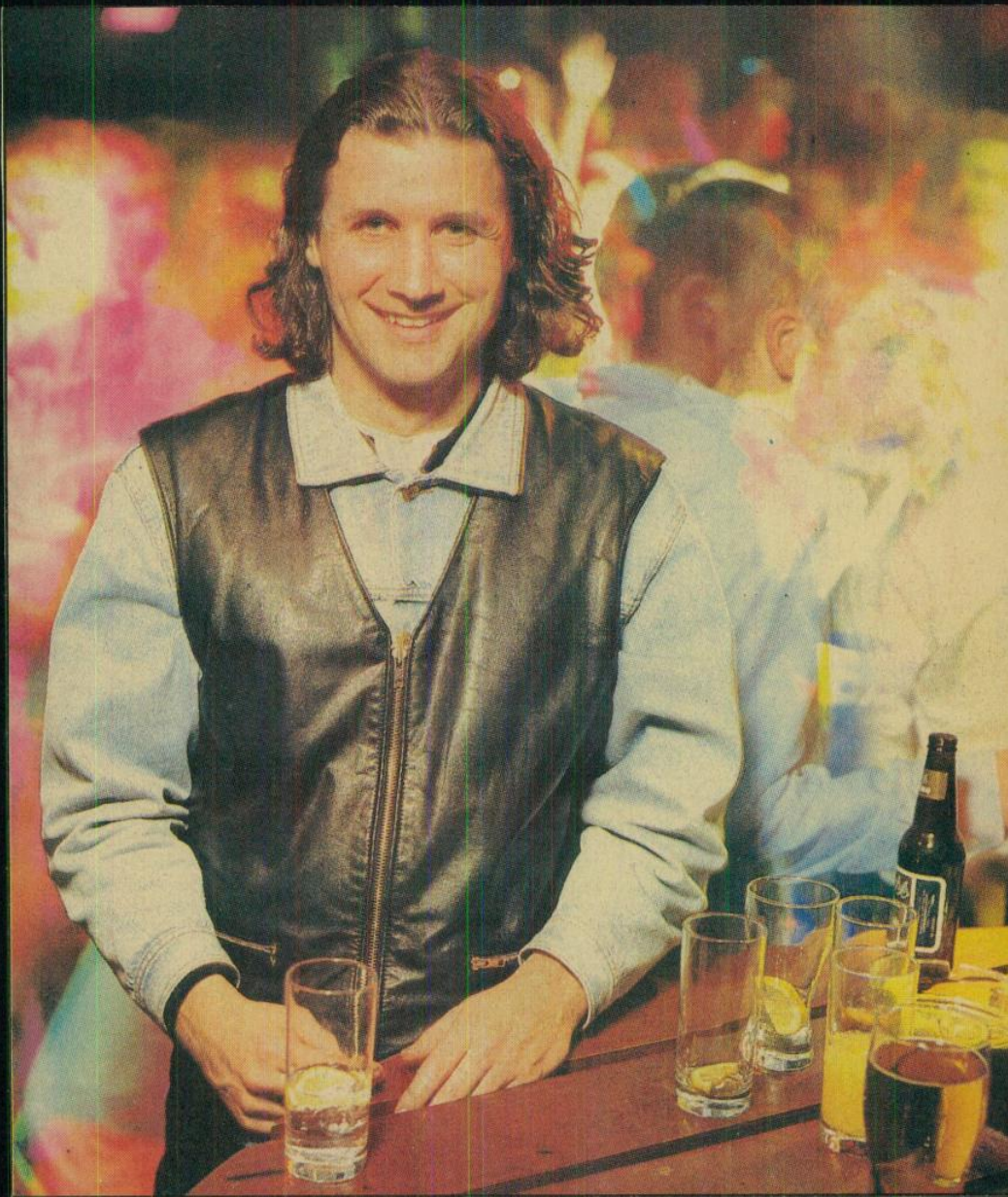


Fig.1 John Reynolds, owner of the POD.





Reynolds promptly moved back to Dublin to open a new kind of club, one based on style and music rather than after hours drinking. The entire club, including renovation and damp proofing, cost Reynolds 150,000 pounds, funded by a bank loan and his own savings. The decor features a lot of metal, stone and wood, very different from the shabby velvet and flock wallpaper of older Dublin nightclubs like *Lillie's Bordello* and the basements of *Leeson Street*.



## CHAPTER 1

### HARCOURT STREET RAILWAY STATION

The most comprehensive study of the history of the Harcourt Street Railway Station is an unpublished thesis by Rose Marie Daly, submitted for a B.Ed in Carysfort College, Dublin in 1980. It can be found in the Irish Rail Records Society library in Heuston Station, Dublin.

The history of the railway line began as an Act of Parliament on the 16th of July 1846. It brought 2 railway companies into being , the Dublin, Dundrum & Rathfarnham railway company and the Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow & Dublin railway company. On the 10th of July 1854 the first service commenced but only a temporary terminus existed at Harcourt Road. In June 1855, the company obtained an act for the extension to a location on the south side of St. Stephen's Green. By the end of 1856 the original idea of extending the line to St. Stephen's Green was abandoned and on the 23rd of December, the shareholders approved the companies proposals of extending to a newly proposed site at Harcourt Street, then an enclosure of pasture land belonging to the Hon. Mrs. Hely-Hutchinson. Harcourt Street station was opened on the 7th of February 1859.

The station itself (Figs. 2.&3.) was designed by George Wilkinson and has his vigour as much in the bold curve of the shed as in the







Fig.2 Outside of the Harcourt Street Railway Station.



Fig.3 Outside of the Harcourt Street Railway Station.





massing of the main building, with its impressive Tuscan collonade and its interior Doric order articulating the entrance. The rough hewn limestone and granite under red brick creates a texture continued on through the vaults, with their limestone walls and granite arches. Its Grandeur, however, belied the fact that it possessed only one platform.

Harcourt Street station is a beautiful example of the blending of materials and textures no less than of forms.....The planning is ingenious and pleasing, especially the arrangement of the two staircases..... As a composition in masses, it is excellent (Craig, 1969, p.301).

Falling revenues convinced C.I.E. to terminate the line on December 31st 1958, just a month short of the hundredth anniversary of the opening of the Harcourt Street terminus.

As darkness fell on the last day of 1958 and the 16.25 train from Harcourt Street rumbled on its way to Bray to the echo of detonators, an epoch ended, although the publicity recieved at the time and since ensures that it will be remembered as Ireland's most controversial railway closure (Young, 1969, p.15).

Harcourt Street and Harcourt Road have changed dramatically since the closure of the station. In 1958 they provided all the necessary facilities for the train passengers, from the small boutiques, fruities, barbers and cafes to the opticians, chiropodists and dentist surgeries. Today, however, the picture that confronts us is a rather dismal one. Many houses in both Harcourt Street and





Harcourt Road have been demolished in order to make room for the continuing inflow of offices, which now occupies 78% of Harcourt Street and 40% of Harcourt Road.

The closure was due to the situation of the station itself. It was a considerable distance from the city centre and was even outside the fringe of the conventional business and shopping areas. This disadvantage was realised even before the station's completion and plans were put forward for an extension to St. Stephen's Green. These plans fell through however. Various meagre attempts were made to provide through rail and bus tickets to the city centre, but these efforts never came to fruition.

Today, however, the station, in relation to the main shopping areas of the city, is situated in an excellent position, not too close to the hustle and bustle of busy shopping streets, but at the same time, not too far away so as to be inaccessible by a short walk (Fig. 4.).

Harcourt Street station is now a Commercial Bank, and the platform section and the turntable room are now the POD and the Chocolate Bar, but once housed Dunlop tyres. The other vault is home to Findlater's wine merchants (Fig. 5.).





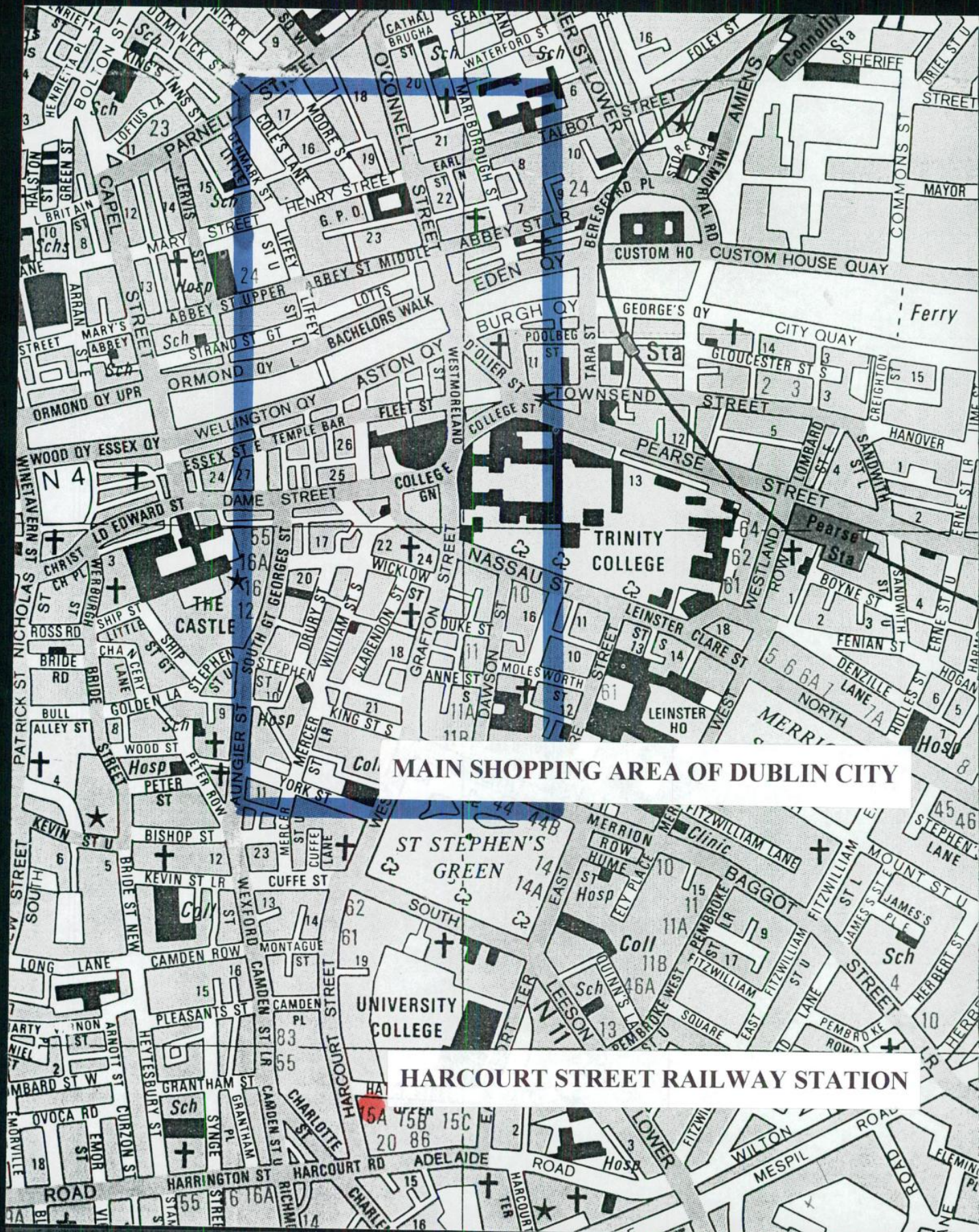


Fig.4 Map of Harcourt Street Railway Station and surrounding area..







Fig.5 Outside the vaults of the POD and Findlaters wine merchants.





## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WORK OF RON McCULLOCH

Ron McCulloch, was born in Glasgow, Scotland. He studied there and now has his architectural practice there. However, although based in Glasgow he has an international reputation holding titles such as "European Designer of the Year", having designed the 'Tunnel' in Glasgow. New York's 'Tunnel' nightclub also has McCulloch's name on it and was here where John Reynolds first experienced his design capabilities having worked there. Naturally, when Reynolds decided to open his own club, the POD, in Dublin, he wanted the best and so, Ron McCulloch with his reputation to his name, was chosen.

Influenced by Alfredo Arribas of Barcelona fame and Philippe Starck, almost a household name by now, McCulloch set about transforming a disused railway vault of the old Harcourt Street railway station into an award winning designer nightclub, a task he succeeded in doing, with the POD winning, amongst other awards, the '*Disco and Club International magazine*' award for best nightclub.

To talk to, McCulloch is a quiet, relaxed character of pleasant disposition but when the time comes for giving orders, the work gets done immediately. He knows exactly what he is about and it





is this level headed approach that has earned him such respect in the design and architectural world.

Since the opening of the POD, John Reynolds has opened up the 'Chocolate Bar' right next to the POD. Naturally, Ron McCulloch was given the task of excavating the 2,500 square feet of rock that used to be the old turntable room. In an interview with the Evening Herald, he gives an indication as to the scale of the project:

I must admit I had a wee problem getting my head around excavating a 60ft thick solid backfill. It's one of the most unusual projects I've ever undertaken in that I couldn't even see the space I was to design. I mean, it took us three weeks alone to knock out the door ! (O'Reilly, 1994, p.14).

Rumour has it that yet another extension to the POD is in the pipeline, with an auditorium for concerts planned for the upper level. As of yet, this is just speculation but if the plan ever comes to fruition, then there is no doubt as to who will be undertaking the design and development. Ron McCulloch has proved himself, not only through the POD in Dublin, but internationally, and undoubtedly in the future, we will continue to see top class designs from this top class designer.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE POD

We should stop pretending that everything is invented; it clearly isn't. Whoever says they don't copy is an innocent or a liar. To design is to manipulate. It is not to invent forms but rather to put existing ones together, as this is how they are transformed (Coad, 1990, p.51).

If you did not know of its whereabouts, you could be forgiven for passing by the *POD* and not noticing it at all, because from the outside it adopts a Philippe Starck trait of being very much played down and discreet, almost secretive as to what delights await inside, the only clue being the steel '*POD*' name above the door, by day almost invisible, blending in to the stone wall of the building (Fig. 6.), by night illuminated by two small blue lights mounted on tall, black, box-section tubes which rise up from the ground beside the door to meet the *POD* name (Figs. 7 & 8). Also the fact that four or five black-clad hulks of doormen almost completely block the large double door, preventing any unlucky hopeful who failed to impress, to get past, might give a clue that something special lay inside. Like the speak-easies of the Prohibition era, this place admits no-one but those whom they choose to admit, causing a frisson of expectation in those who are granted access.

The interior of the club belongs more to design than to architecture because it was conceived as a project as opposed to a scheme, it is







Fig.6 The outside of the POD by day.



Fig.7 Tall box-section tube and POD logo.







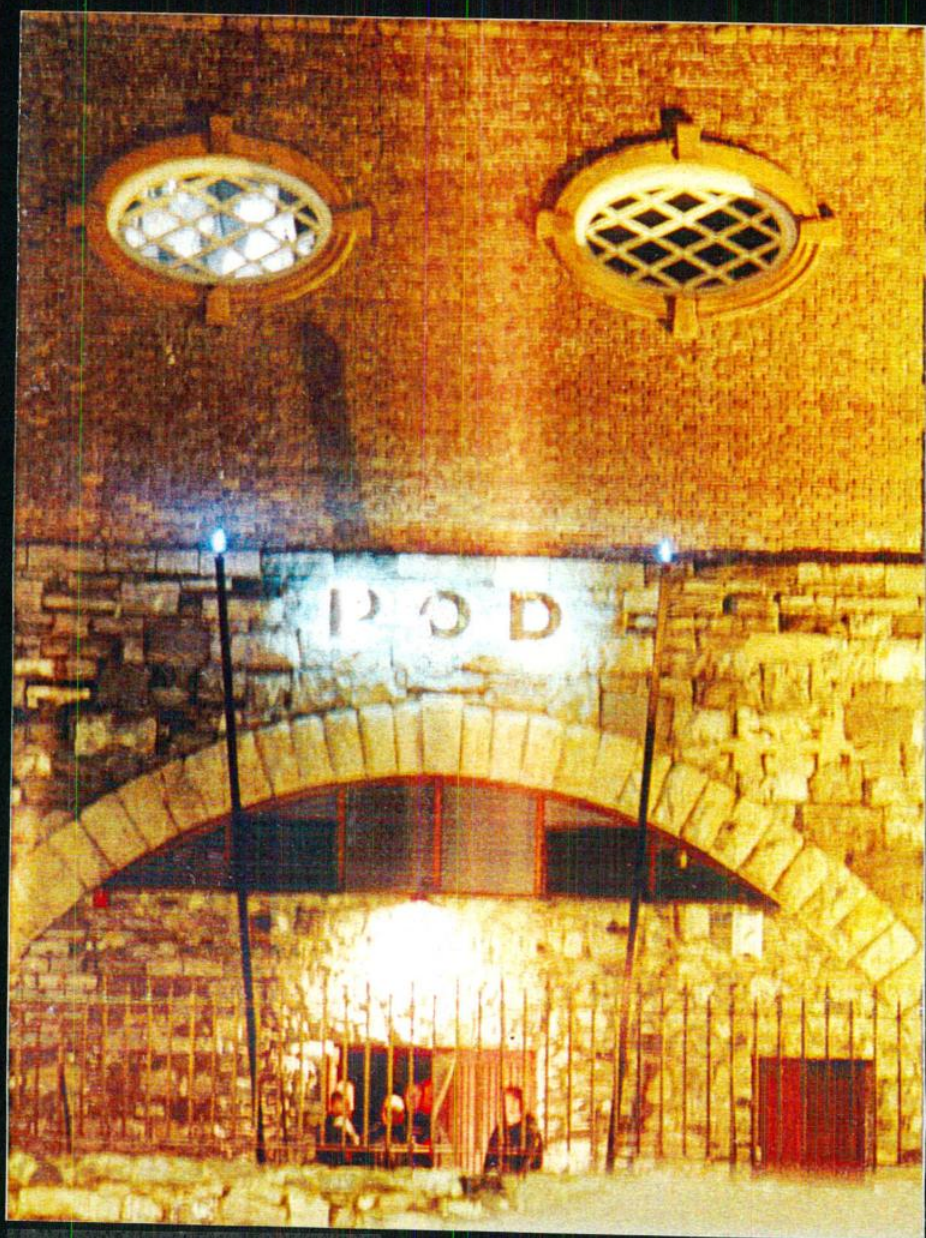


Fig.8 The POD by night.





accessible to everybody (not all architecture necessarily is) and it is subject to a more sculptural rather than constructional approach

Upon entering the *POD*, you are greeted with an actual Pod-like structure which houses the ticket booth, the office and the cloakroom. This was specifically designed like this because of the relatively small size and narrow shape of the club, to maximise whatever space was available. This idea resembles *Exit*, a nightclub in Oslo, Norway designed by Peter Abrahamsen. A club specifically designed for people who wanted to see and be seen. Like the *POD*, he left the main part of the club as open as possible. He placed the cloakroom, toilets and ticket booth in the lift lobby that forms the entrance. This set-up allows posers to immediately glance through the door, across the dancefloor and up to the bar before deciding to make either a discreet or flamboyant entry.

So too, in the *POD*, the pod structure, clad in wide bands of copper and steel is surrounded by a low, wooden entrance stairs (Fig. 9). The ticket booth (Fig. 10), strangely phallic, awaits you upon entry. A large pink velvet, oval orifice with a beautifully sculpted wooden dish encloses a smiling cashier, more than willing to accept your money in exchange for a ticket which must be presented to another bouncer, the last line of defence, before you come to the stairs. The stairs that lead you into the *POD*. You go up these stairs, yet unable to see the inside, onto a low balcony around the pod-structure, illuminated only by the bright lights that shine directly outwards above your head through short thick cut-







Fig.9 The wooden entrance stairs..

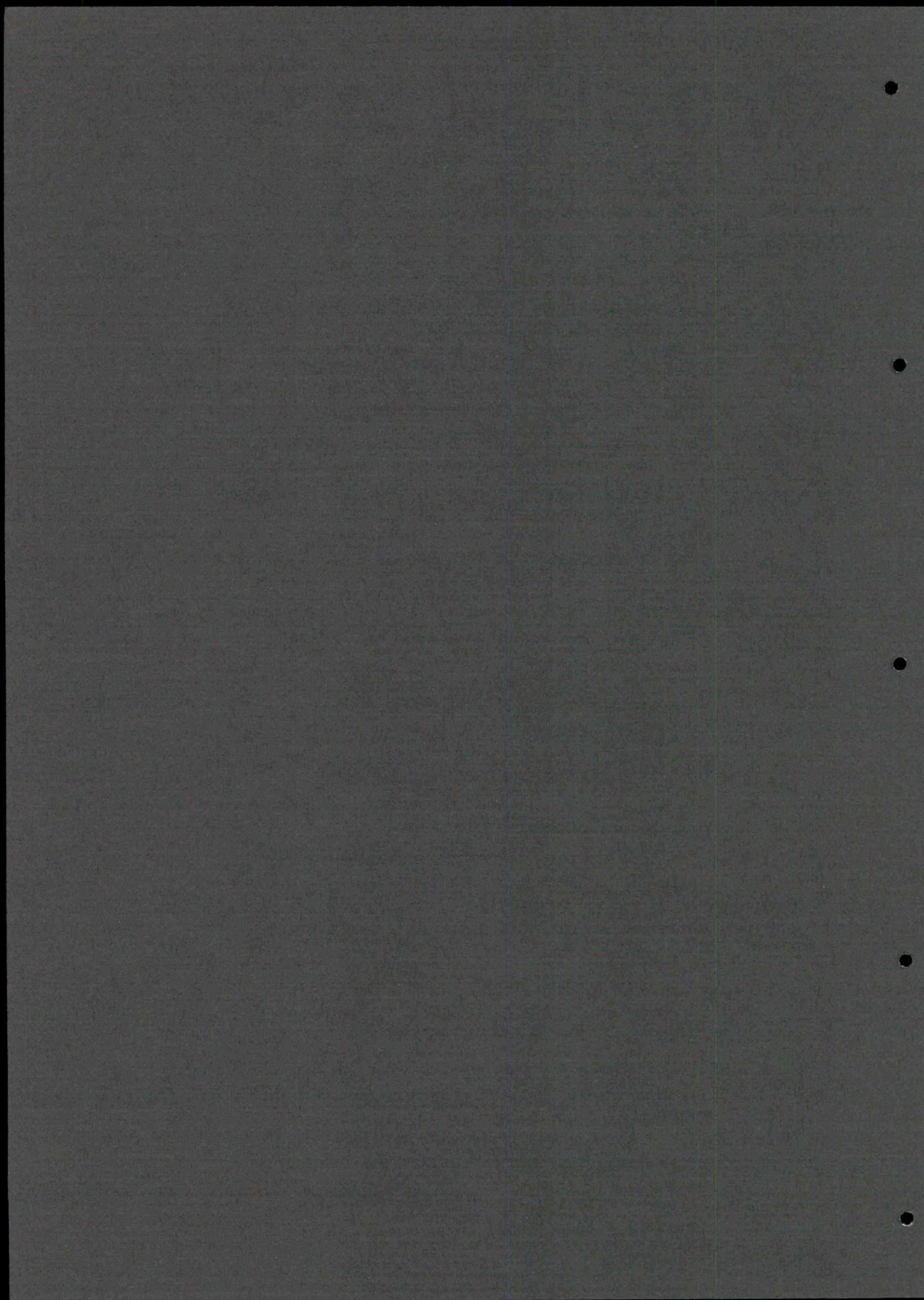






Fig.10 The ticket booth.







glass pipes, and down some more stairs until you are greeted by the cloak-room. After having done this, you are still on the same level that you started on when entering the club. This was a detail used by Morris Lapidus;

To reach the dining room, one climbs three steps. A door opens, and one goes back down three steps. The dining room is on the same level as the hall. But the people climb up, on to the dais - and before sitting down, they have found themselves on centre stage. They have played their role in the spectacle. Everyone looks at them. They look back at everyone (Bossiere, 1991, p.22).

Just as it was important in Lapidus' dining room for the people entering to be seen, so too in the *POD*, where being seen means everything, you can scan the bar and sitting area from the raised part of the stairs, but more importantly, during your period of obligatory exhibitionism, you can be seen by everybody else.

The theory behind this structure is that because the area inside is rather small, it would be impractical to have the entrance, ticket booth and cloakroom scattered all over the club as this would compromise on space. It is from this structure that the *POD* gets its name, and it was from this that the concept of having organic rather than geometric shapes throughout the entire design came.

The cloakroom (Fig. 11) makes up the end of your circuit of the pod-structure at the bottom of the stairs. Changing from the classy





Fig.11 The Cloakroom.





copper finish of the rest of the structure, the cloakroom is painted purple with a simple ledge above and below the square window with nothing extra-special to behold. It appears to continue on the structures journey through the wall of the club itself, but does in fact, stop there at the wall where you are met with the cigarette machine sporting a *POD* logo. What is under one's coat is the most important thing for people in the *POD*, Where outside, the coat serves the same purpose for everyone, of keeping out the cold whilst standing in the long queue, but inside with the coats safely put away in the cloakroom only then do you begin to distinguish between the trendy and the very trendy.

### THE SEATING AREA

The seating area, comprising of about thirty chairs, ten tables and a couch, runs from the cloakroom down the left hand side of the building to the beginning of the dancefloor. The chairs (Fig. 12) are low seated poof types, supported by three aluminium legs, two at the front and one at the back with either black or light blue p.v.c. covering the heavily padded base. Whilst they are surprisingly comfortable to sit on, they do not offer any back support and thus do not encourage lengthy periods of sitting down, the idea being to encourage people to get up and dance, this being the *Place of Dance* after all. For the lazy, or for those with a hot date for the evening, there is a long couch to relax on (Fig. 12). Covered in a light blue velvet material throughout with a section of brown sewn into the seat, the couch is also supported by three short aluminium





legs, not unlike the chairs with two at the front and one at the back. The three cushions, one blue, one grey and one green do little to cover up the beer stains, but these imperfections cannot be seen at night when the lights are dimmed. Unfortunately the wonders of flash photography show up little tarnishes of the city's most coveted club's couch.

At the other side of the club, directly across and at the end of the bar lies another couch (Fig. 13), the same, except this one is light purple with two purple cushions and one blue. Being in the main thoroughfare of the club between the bar and the toilets, this couch does not get as much use as its counterpart in the main seating arena, but does sport one or two stains so as to be in keeping with the other. This couch is the last stop before the private bar, so for those overawed by the occasional glitterati that grace the *POD* with their presences, at least one can say that they sat really close to somebody famous (neglecting to point out that there was a five foot thick solid stone wall between them, not to mention the ubiquitous bouncers, always on hand to prevent even the slightest of glances through the red velvet curtain for a sneak preview of who may be inside).

The tables in the main seating area (Fig. 14) are of a curved triangular shape, rather small in height to compliment the chairs and with space enough just for an ashtray and a couple of drinks. The tabletop itself is a grey/green colour with a textured leaf-like section in one of the corners which pretty much resembles the







Fig. 12 The chairs and light-blue couch.



Fig. 13 The purple couch.







Fig.14 Curved triangular shaped table.





shape of the dancefloor. A light grey plastic surround emphasises the shape of the tabletop and it too being curved, ensures that there are no straight lines to be found. The table is supported with one tubular leg extending upwards from a circular base, both of which are black in colour.

The seating area therefore, carries on the organic theme of the *POD* from the soft lines and colour of the couch through to the bud-like shape and soft feel of the chairs to the leaf-like tables. The fact that the walls of the *POD* have been left untouched from its railway days might seem like it would clash with the organic shapes, it being bare limestone, but it does in fact compliment it splendidly. Possibly because of the fact that it is not a uniform brick structure but rather hand built stonework, it gives a texture to the wall, each stone a different shape than the last. Also, because of its tunnel shape, the *POD*'s roof and walls are the same curve, a big arch, like half a leaf. There is no way that the *POD* would have the same effect if it were a standard four walled building and it was from this original shape that the idea stemmed to have the whole nightclub adopt that feel of nature.

### **THE BAR**

The bar. The first port of call for the majority of people whatever club they go to. The bar in the *POD* is special, running down the right hand side of the club from the pod structure to the entrance of the private bar.





From right to left as you work your way along the bar, the first section of the bartop (Fig. 15) is made from what looks like light and dark strips of wood. This resembles the look of the pod structure with its copper and steel bands encircling it. The bartop then changes at the corner to a steel finish, the distinct change of surface being marked out by rivets that stand proud of the surface. This finish continues down the entire length of the bar, broken only by flowing shapes of copper spread here and there between the bar taps.

The face of the bar from the bartop down to the ground has been left plain grey apart from a section at the end with deep orange glazed ceramic tiles. The foot rests (Fig. 16) have been made from chrome tubing which rises up from the ground in arches about one metre in length and run the length of the bar, occasionally cutting the ceramic mosaic that laps up to the barfront here and there.

Four sets of beer taps rise from the bartop. Each is a set of eleven pipes that twist and turn their way from the bartop reaching for the roof (Fig. 17). Of these eleven, six are made from copper and entwine themselves around each other in front of the other five which rise up but then bend backwards and become the beer taps. The six copper pipes rise up like shoots from a plant camouflaging the beer taps behind, and are in fact lights which flicker like candles creating a warm glow at the bar front, each seeming to strain for light in this tunnel of stone just as a plant will yearn to







Fig.15 The bartop.



Fig.16 Footrest.









Fig.17 The beer taps.

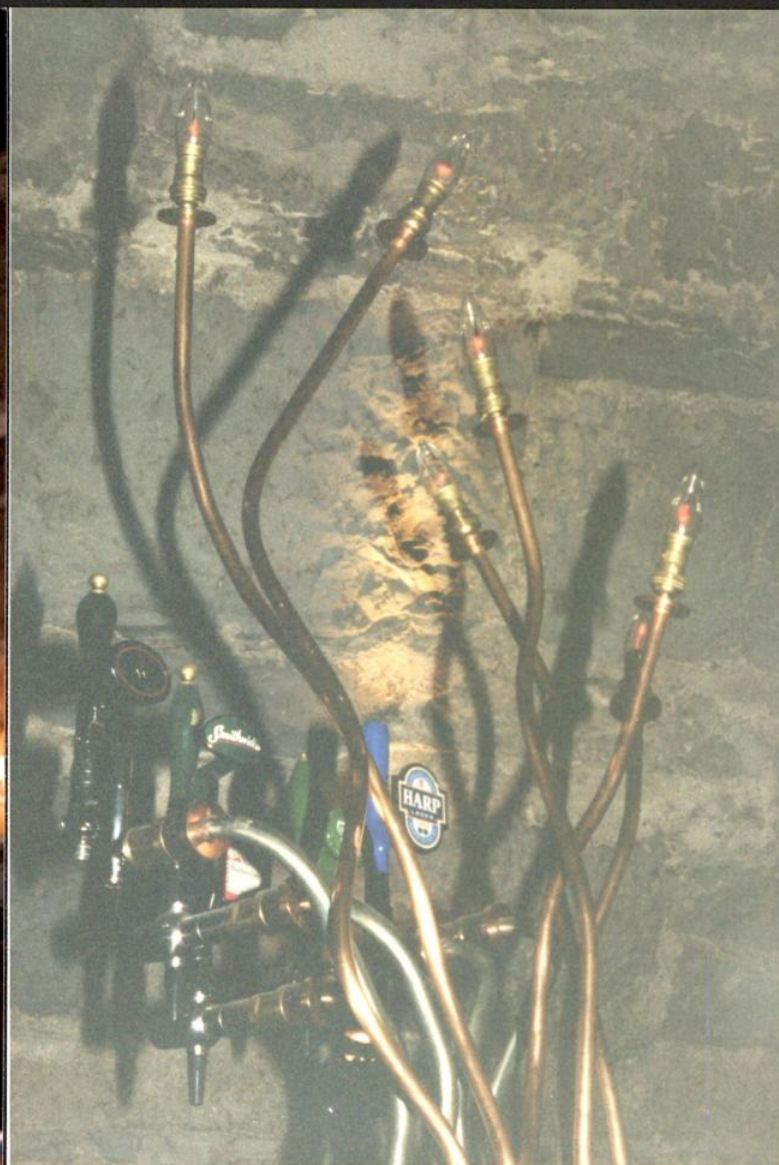
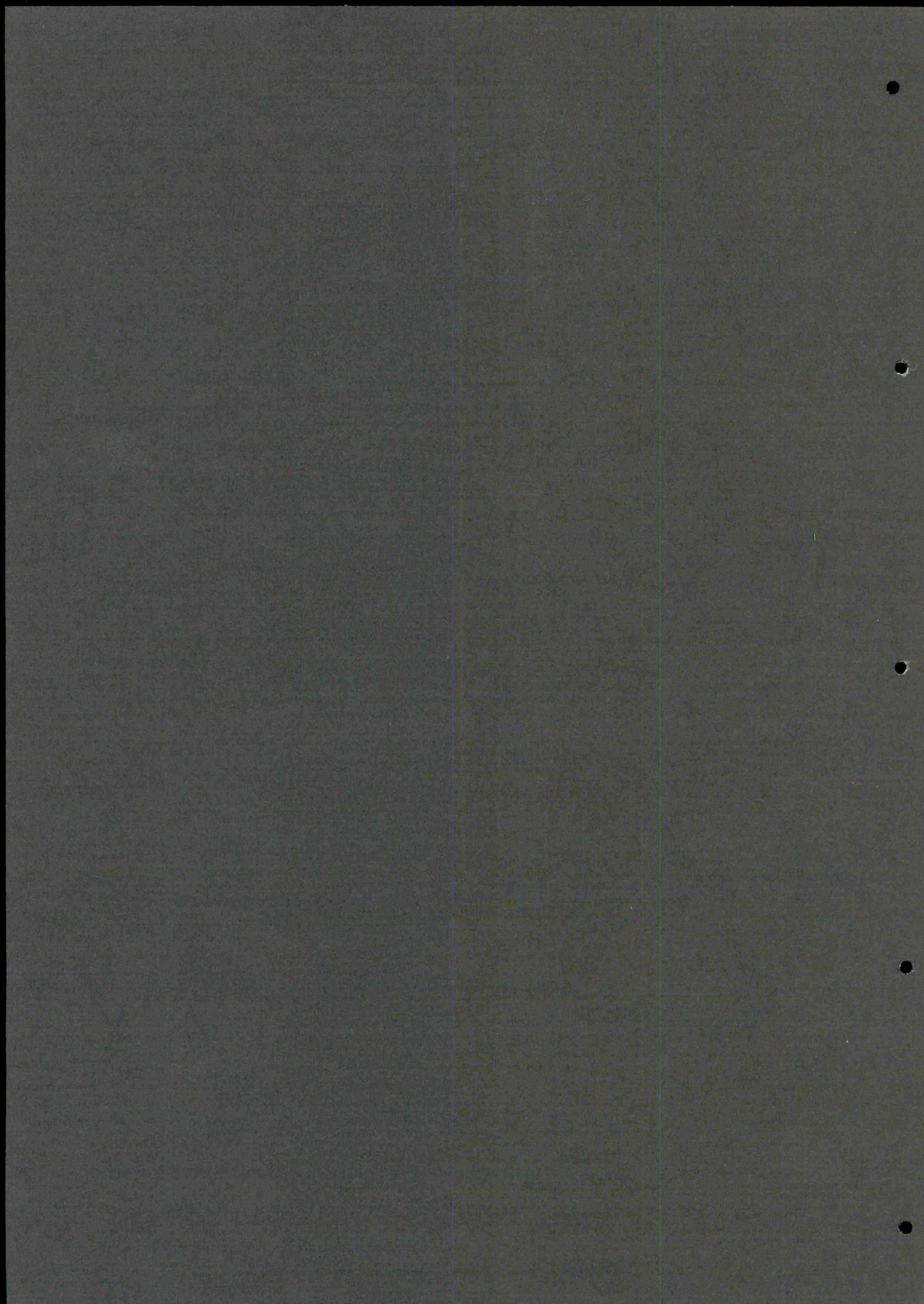


Fig.18 Flickering candle lights.







grow towards the sunlight (Fig. 18). The fact that you cannot clearly see the taps at the bar creates an atmosphere of its own. Not one of a typical bar, but a more freindly, natural one that welcomes the customer to its warm glow.

Behind the bar, illuminated by the upwardly pointing halogen lamps (Fig. 19), are two display cabinets, each totally different but at the same time fitting perfectly with the mood that is being created by the bar itself. On the right hand side is mounted a steel, three shelved cabinet (Fig. 20) that has been totally untreated and left with its harsh, hard edged natural finish. In it however, are thirteen bottles of designer *Absolut* vodka, a product that has undergone a radical advertising campaign over the last couple of years and has become the 'trendiest' of the many vodkas on the market, its image also having been used for early *POD* flyers (Fig. 21). Looking ever so much like a soft drink bottle with its rounded milk bottle-type curves and 'silver top', the large blue letters of the logo on clear glass sets this vodka apart from any of the competitors and seeing as the *POD* is the place to be seen, it only seems fitting that *Absolut* should have its pride of place on its very own shelf behind the bar. Perhaps the reason for the shelves cold finish is to emphasise the vodka even more.

On the left of this, cut in to the wall rather than mounted on it, sits another three shelved cabinet (Fig. 22), this time the shelves being made of glass and the vodka on display being *Smirnoff*. What is interesting here is the red velvet screen in front of the shelves, yet



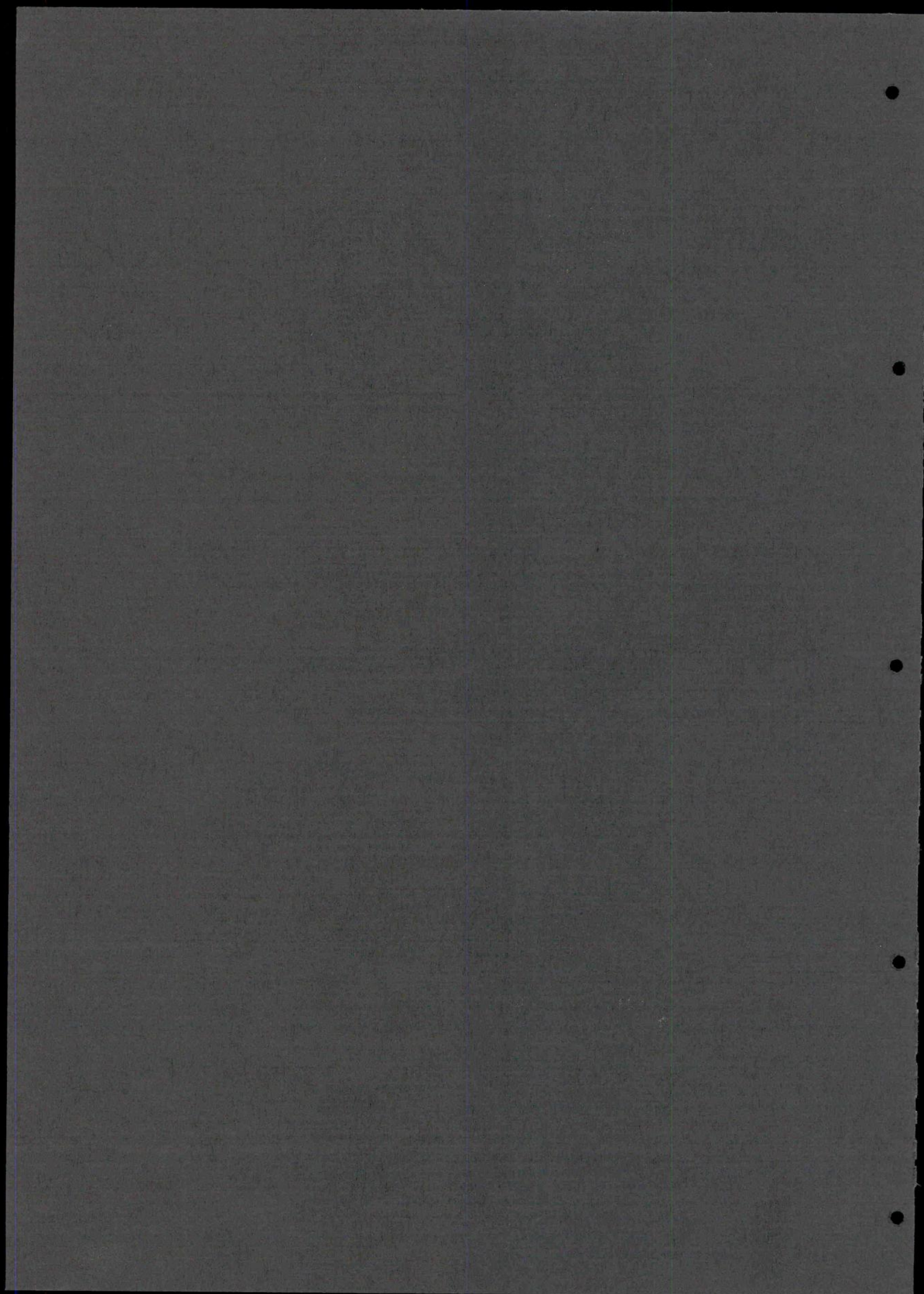


Fig.19 Halogen lamp.



Fig.20 Steel shelf with bottles of *Absolut* vodka.







W

£5.00

W E D N E S D A Y

# ABSOLUT *Country of Pod* POD

*Innovative house beats and European dance rhythms  
with essential club favourites...and live theatre.*

*Denis at the door. 11 till late.*

POD

Fig.21 POD flyer using 'Absolut' imagery.







Fig.22 Red velvet cabinet.

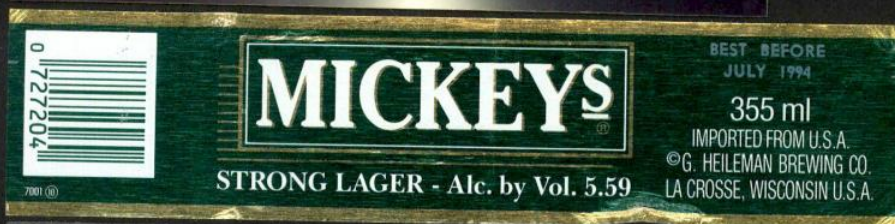
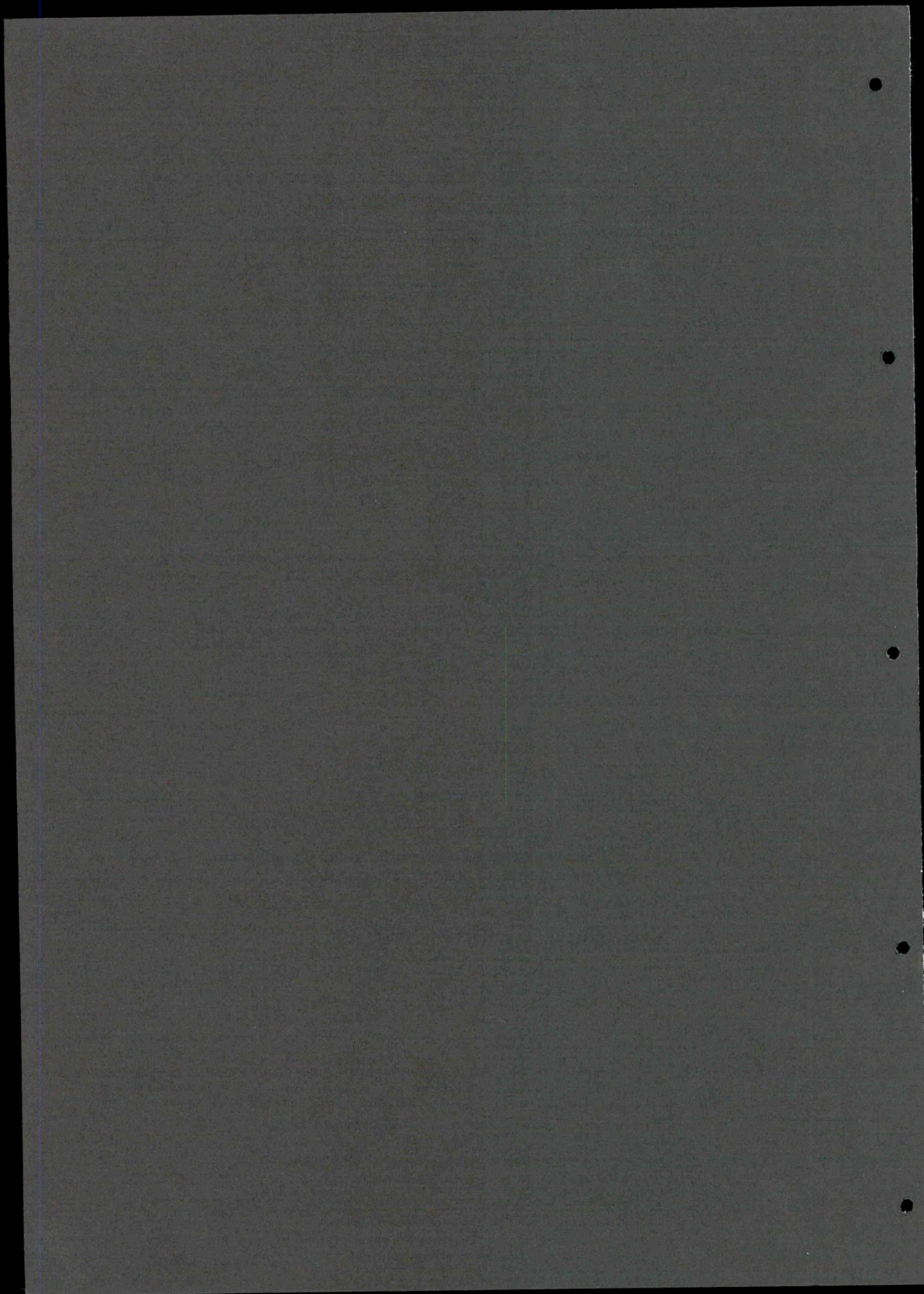


Fig.23 Bottle of *Mickey's* beer.







again a free flowing organic shape, giving the impression of looking at the vodka through one of Starck's lava lamps. The red and white label of the *Smirnoff* vodka suits the red velvet on the white background, but one feels that perhaps the interesting shape is wasted on a drink so common and that it would be much better suited to one of the newer, more trendy drinks on the market such as *Mickey's* beer (Fig. 23) or even *T.N.T.* cider. However, the relationship between the two shelves works well, even with them being so different. Maybe it is the fact that both are displaying vodka or the fact that both are surrounded on all sides with stone. Either way though, they compliment the mood created by the taps at the bar front and add to the atmosphere of the bar area as a whole.

### THE LEDGES AND DRINKS STANDS

At intervals around the walls of the club, are ledges for holding one's drinks on. Made from unfinished steel and copper, there are two different shapes. The smaller of the two (Fig. 24), and also the most common, is mounted underneath with two bolts drilled into the wall, although it gives the impression that it is connected in some way from the two sides which flare out flat to the wall. The whole ledge is made out of steel and then a section of copper is added on to the left hand section. The ledge in itself does not offer very much room to hold drinks on and when full, one would suspect that many a drink would take a tumble, especially off the left hand side with there being no lip at all and the right only







Fig.24 Small drinks ledge.

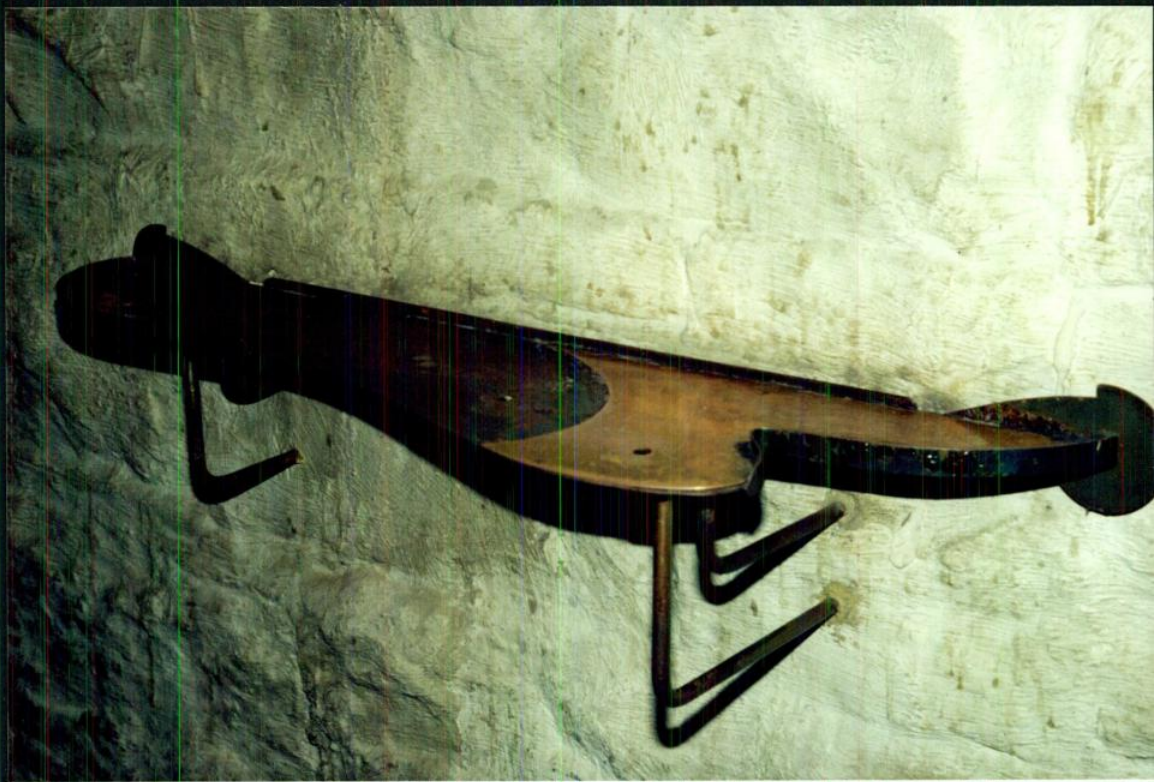


Fig.25 Large drinks ledge.







offering a rather small one that curves around almost to the middle of the ledge.

The large ledge (Fig. 25), of which there are only a couple, has, what seems to be a more solid attachment to the wall with four legs that drop vertically downwards from the ledge and bend to enter drilled holes in the wall. These legs are then cemented in place. The ledge itself very much resembles the smaller one, being made also from untreated steel and copper, the only difference being that it is longer. Once again, one could question the safety of a drink on this platform. Although it does have a lip on both sides, they do not reach around to the front of the ledge, so those who have their drinks at the back should not be making as many return journeys to the bar as those who have their drinks precariously balanced on the front.

Around the dancefloor are sited sculptural tables made from steel and wood (Fig. 26). The frame rises up from the bolted base plates in the form of four legs supported by two arches and two 'T'-shaped bars also welded to the base plates. The four legs rise upwards and outwards, almost beholding the tabletop, not unlike the way the *POD* name on the outside of the building is beheld by the large black box-section arms which rise up powerfully from the ground. The two arches that support the legs are in keeping with the foot rests that run along the base of the bar. There is no way that all of the metalwork is necessary structurally, but rather was employed sculpturally. The two 'T' bars at the side serve no other





Fig.26 Dancefloor table.





purpose than to give the sculpture some depth at the base. Also the welded sections of the structure have been left unpolished so that one can see the burn marks. This creates a raw, natural look to the sculpture and suits the natural atmosphere created in the *POD*.

The table top itself is made from four lengths of wood, cut to the shape of the pointed ellipse that makes up the *POD* logo and in plan, stretches out to the same length as the base, so as to prevent anybody tripping over the 'legs' at the bottom.

The table top is intersected halfway across by a piece of steel that also rises up from the ground and flares out to a point above the table's surface where it curves back in on itself to the centre of the table. As well as adding to the organic feel of the table, with its use of the pointed ellipse, wide arch and narrow tubing, the centre piece also serves a practical purpose of dividing the table in two. Whether or not this was taken into consideration at the design stage, one does not know, but in practice, it is possible for two groups of people to place drinks on the table and each have their own territory.

## **THE MOSAIC AND SCULPTURES**

Running down the centre of the club from the entrance stairs to the dancefloor, a wave of mosaic (Fig. 27) sweeps across from the seating area to the bar, followed by subsequent smaller shapes breaking up the monotony of the concrete floor. All of the tiles are





from *Tilestyle* in Dublin and consist of various types of loose ceramics, mirrors, even broken bottles which were set into the ground. This effect is not unique in Dublin, with *Tilestyle* themselves and the Design Yard in Temple Bar also adopting this decorative approach made famous by Gaudi in Barcelona in the 80's.

What the mosaic does best is to emphasise three large wooden and steel sculptures (Fig. 28) that also run down the centre of the club, giving them a reason for being there almost like them growing upwards, breaking through the foundations of the floor to support the building, the mosaic spreading florally across the floor as if it were growing outwards trying to cover up the concrete.

The three sculptures themselves look very organic, like the shoot of a plant which has been cut away in three sections to show its internal structure, three black box-section tubes that grow upwards and outwards to the roof. The remaining sections of the 'shoot' are made from wood and in horizontal cross section are the same leaf shape as the *POD* logo. The upper two sections are hollow to allow the inside of the whole structure to be illuminated from above by a bright light. (Fig. 29)

## THE TOILETS

Thanks to Starck's magic, the toilet - that place where even the emperor goes alone - has been transformed





Fig.27 Section of mosaic.

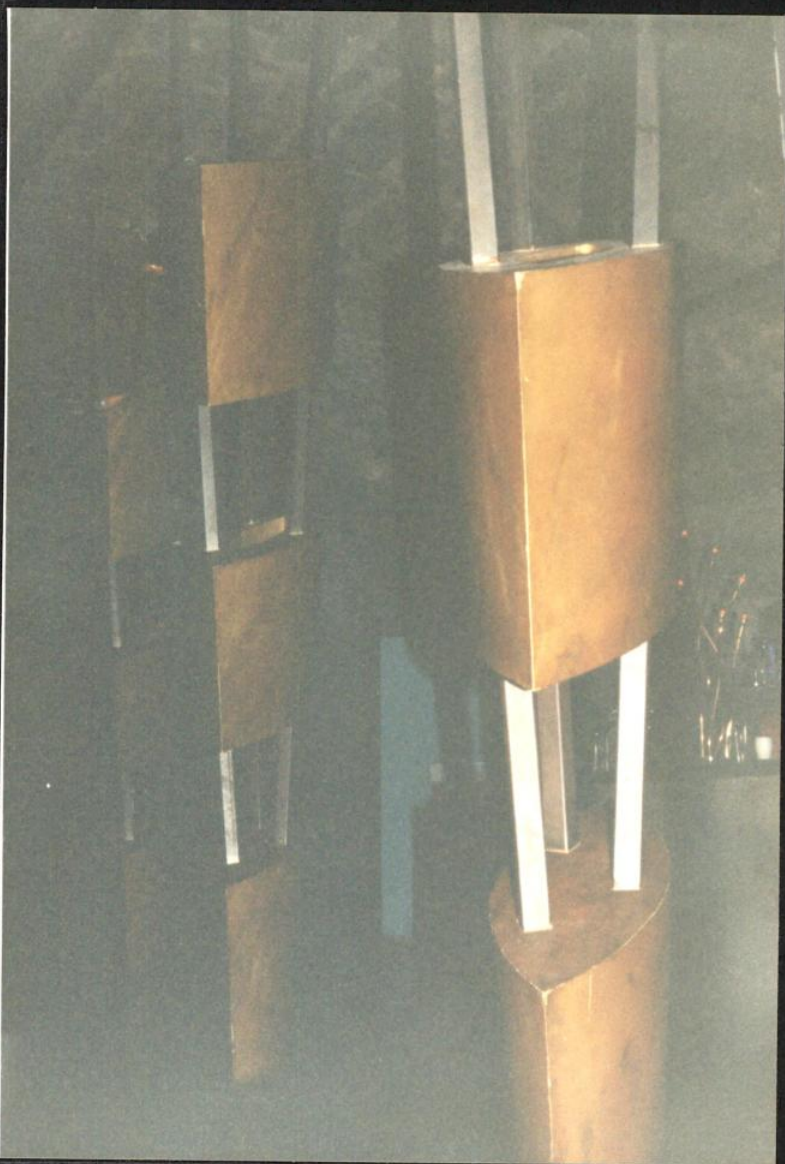


Fig.28 The three wooden and steel sculptures.



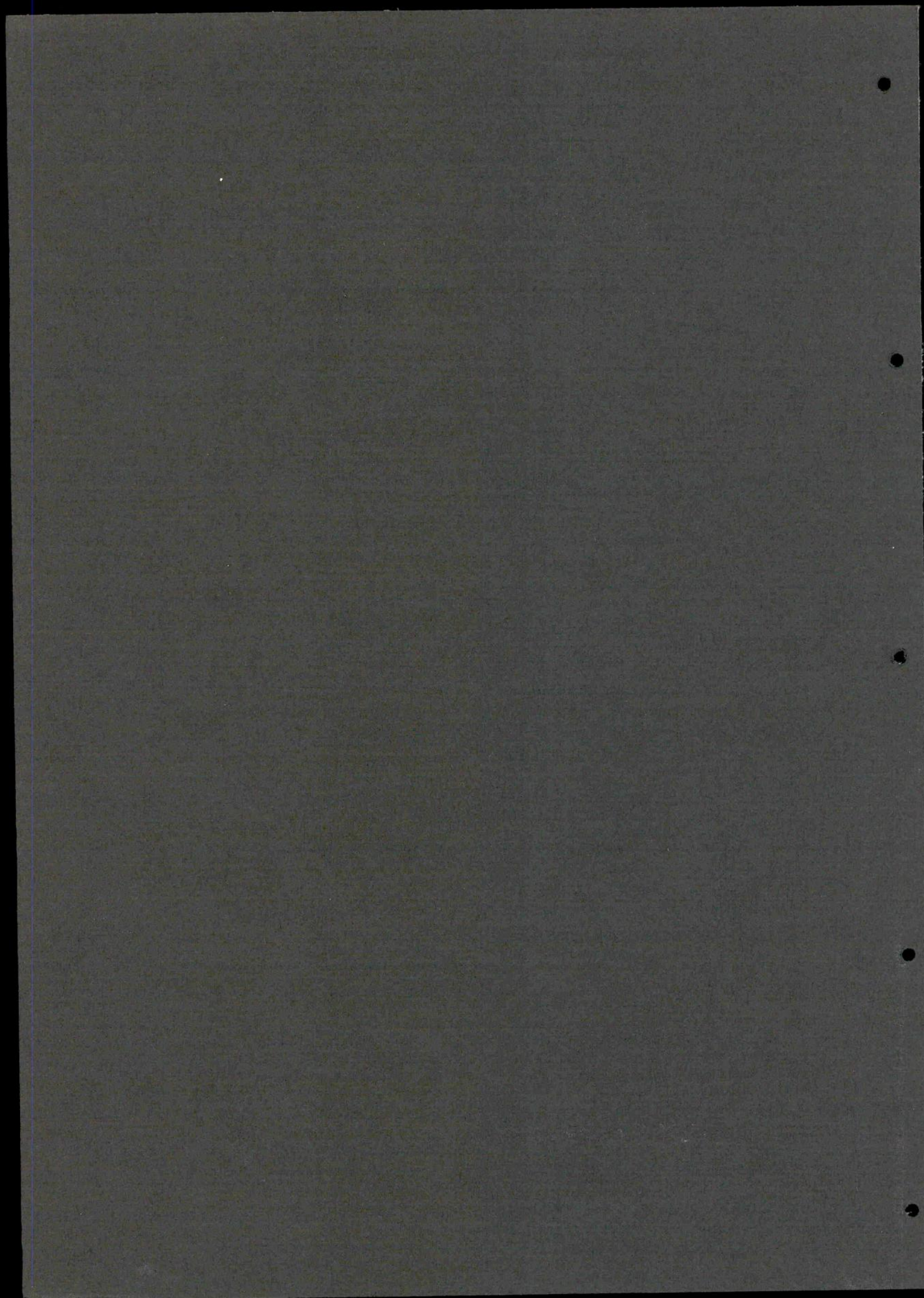




Fig.29 Illuminated sculpture.









into a place not merely of convenience, but of conviviality (Bossiere, 1991, p.24).

Down past the private bar are situated the toilets. To access them though, you must first pass through a pitch black passage, with only the light of the toilets shining through the holes in the door handles to lead the way. Even then, there is absolutely no indication as to which is the male and which is the female toilet. You just have to rely on following the silhouette in front of you, trying to distinguish whether it is male or female and then make your choice accordingly.

The door handles from the outside (Fig. 30), are made up of a curved handle, bolted to the outside of the door, which has a straight bar welded to it that goes through a hole in the door. There is a knob on the end of this straight bar which enables the door to be pulled open from the other side.

The curved handle is bolted in the centre of three metal plates of different shapes that fit together like a jigsaw, which are riveted obviously onto the door. This, like a kickplate on the bottom of a door, serves as something to push the door in with when you realise that the handle is not for pulling. Although the door does say 'PUSH', you cannot see this because there is no light in the passage. From the inside, you see the knob coming through from the other side (Fig. 31), the hole surrounded by a small metal plate, also riveted, and the bolts of the curved handle on the outside coming through, one above and one below. There are two doors



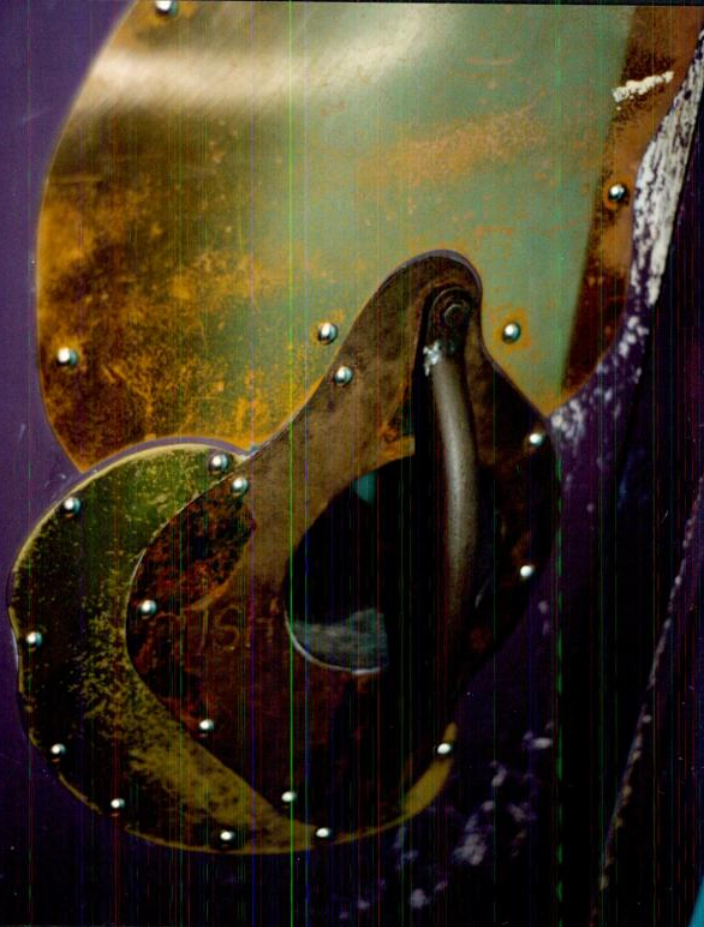


Fig.30 Door handle from the outside.



Fig.31 Door handle from the inside.





into each toilet, both the same and both painted purple, apart from where the paint has been scratched off due to wear and tear.

The inside of the male toilet is painted light blue down the left hand side and has a white ceiling which curves down, creating the correct angle for the mirrors, to the wash-hand basin, or should I say trough. (Fig. 32)

Trimmed with copper and wood, the blue/green mosaic of the wash-hand trough could, without the taps, pass for the urinal. It is at the correct height, slightly lower than an average sink and does curve upwards and out towards you. The prescence of the big taps however, make sure that there is no misunderstanding as to its function. Up above the taps, mirrors are mounted along the wall where it begins to curve into the ceiling. Seeing as the mirrors are mounted too high, this curve means that they are perfectly angled downwards for the user. There are three cubicles on the left hand side from the end of the taps to the back wall. There is nothing special to behold here though.

Directly across, covering the whole of the right hand wall, is the famous waterfall urinal (Fig. 33) that everybody talks about after having been to the *POD* for the first time. Large mirrors cover the wall and a large *POD* logo stretches from one end to the other, lit from behind. From a pipe that runs the lenght of the ceiling, water flows down the mirror creating a waterfall. This is the urinal. Not







Fig.32 Wash hand trough and mirrors.



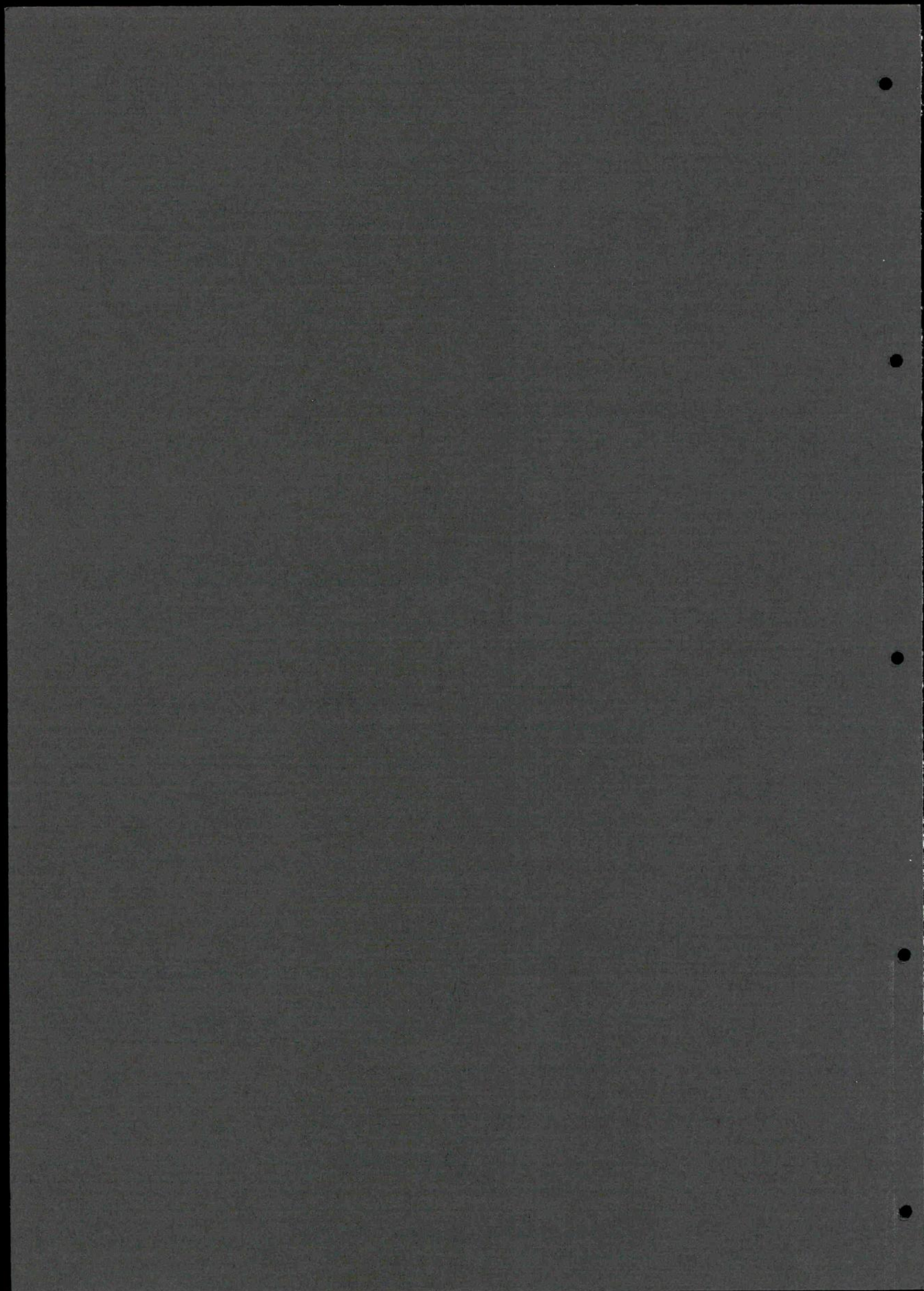






Fig.33 The waterfall urinal.





a particularly original idea by any means, but nonetheless a novelty for those unaware of the designer nightclub situation in Barcelona.

The female toilets (Fig. 34) are the exact same as the male one from the doors to the wash-hand trough, the taps to the mirrors although the mirrors are mounted lower (apart from one or two which must be for the supermodels that occasionally grace the *POD* with their presence) and the walls are painted peach instead of light blue, like the entire interior of the Cafe Costes in Paris . No waterfalls here I'm afraid, but the female toilet does win on cubicles, with six instead of three.

The design of toilets in clubs seems to have taken off with Eduardo Samso's *Nick Havanna* bar in Barcelona in 1986 and also Philippe Starck's *Royalton Hotel* in New York where particular attention was paid to details such as the waterfall urinals, a trend which many designers were to follow, Ron McCulloch included. Arribas' *Network* also took the design of toilets a step further with its completely mirrored walls. Emma Dent Coad suggests that this is a recurrent device of Arribas' - "not to encourage lingering" (Dent Coad, 1990, p.63), but as it happens, there is something about these interiors that make you come back even if you do not really need to go to the toilet, and they are also the first thing that people show their friends who have not been to the club before.







Fig.34 The female toilets.





## THE PRIVATE BAR

There are two entrances to the Private bar from the side of the dancefloor (Fig. 35). Each is softly lit from the ground by a large square light, and a red velvet curtain prevents anyone from looking in who should not be. They are also usually blocked by a bouncer or two to keep out any autograph hunters or general nosey-parkers.

The bar itself is part of the adjacent vault at the back of *Findlaters* wine cellars. The right hand wall is almost completely covered with a mosaic of bits of broken mirrors and on the bottom right and left are tiled mosaics that bend and twist giving an impression of an oriental dragon both with the shape and also the tiles used (Fig. 36).

The chairs along this wall are all high-backed, single seaters covered in dark blue velvet, placed in twos facing each other (Fig. 37). In the centre of the room, there is a large bud-like four sided chair surrounded with poofs, all of which are also covered in dark blue velvet (Fig. 38). The tables in the private bar (Fig. 39) differ slightly from those in the club, in that they are all that *POD* logo, leaf shape but still, coupled with the softness of the chairs, contribute to the overall organic feel of the club. Each is green surrounded by a wooden border and holds a thick white candle in a glass ashtray.







Fig.35 Entrance to the private bar.





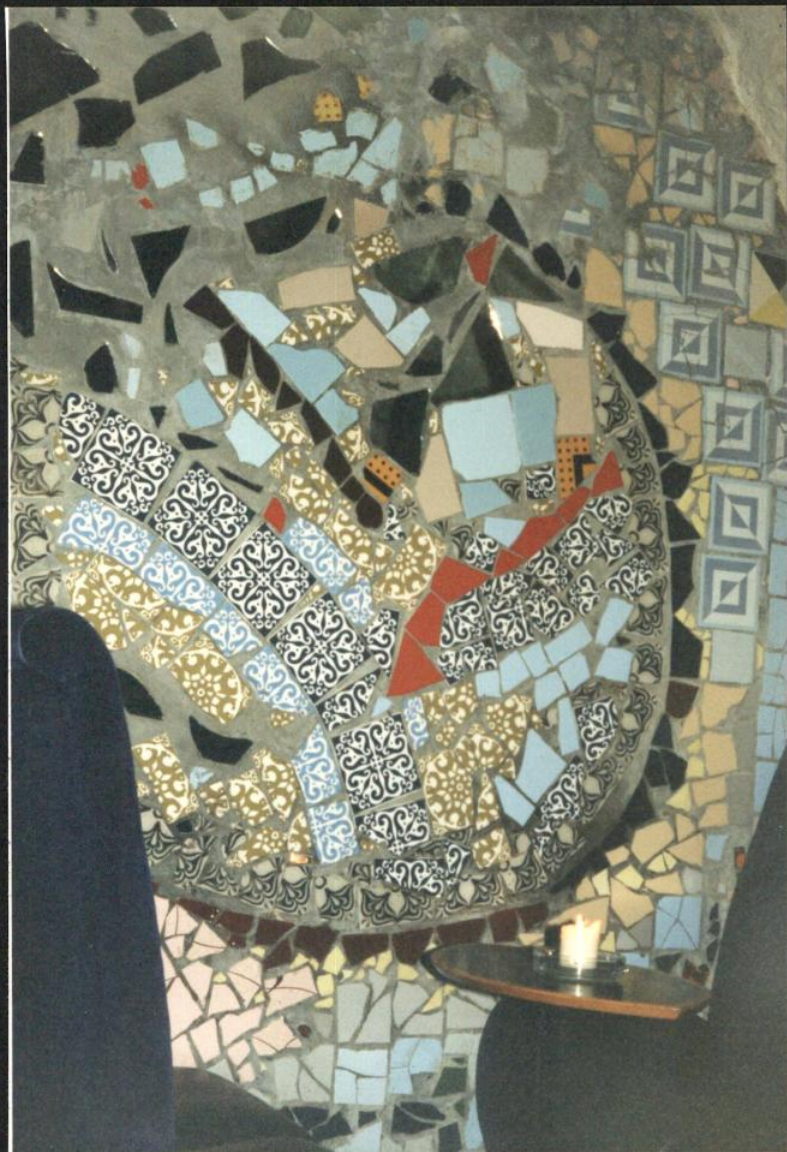


Fig.36 Mosaic of mirrors and tiles.







Fig.37 Single seater chairs beside the mosaic wall.





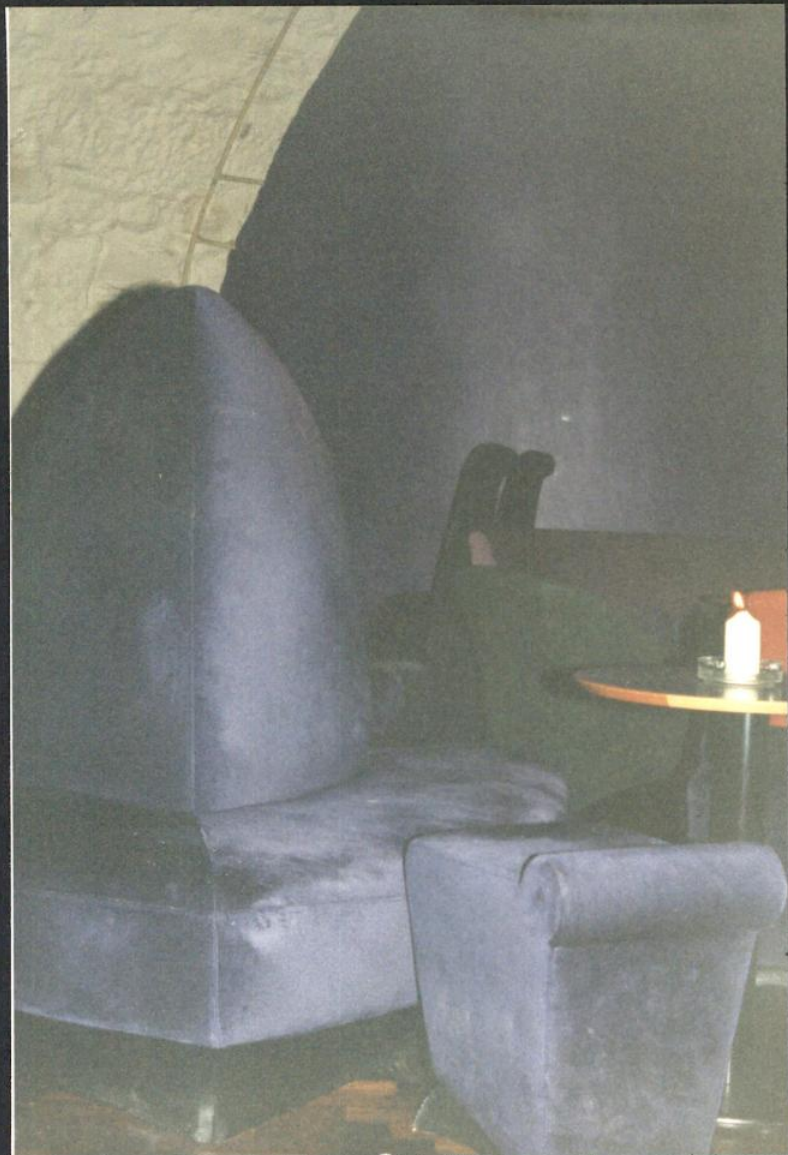


Fig.38 Four-sided chair and poofs.





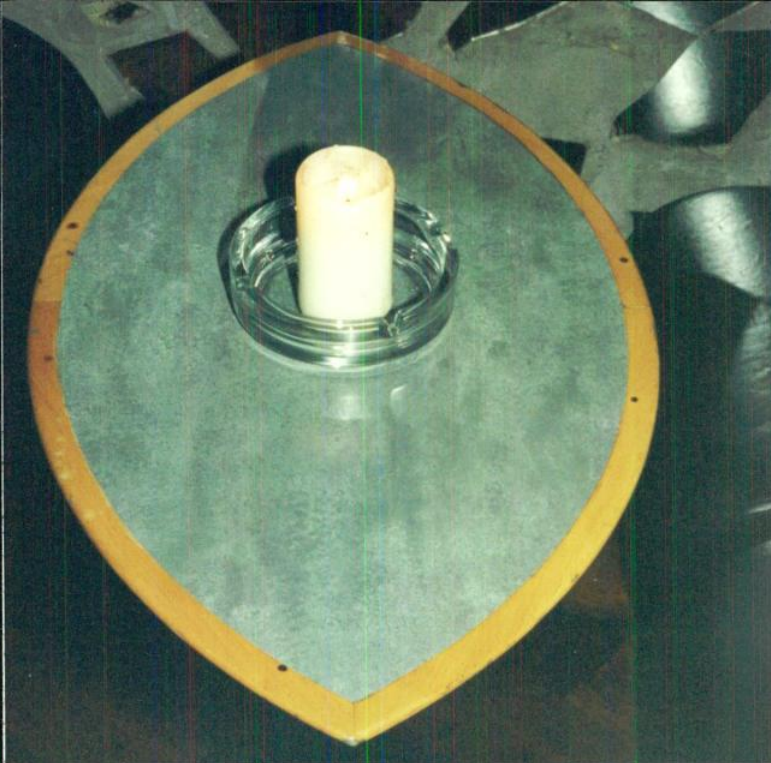


Fig.39 Leaf-shaped table.



Fig.40 Red velvet curtains and Starck chairs.





The wall on the left hand side is covered with long red velvet curtains (Fig. 40) as seen in *Arribas' Velvet*, which sports rich red velvet drapes behind the bar, on either side of the entrance ramp and also like the *POD*, hanging alongside rough stone walls. These curtains provide a backdrop for the peach and green Starck chairs that surround more leaf shaped tables and take up the floor space on the left hand side of the bar. Actually, the bar is rather cluttered with chairs and tables, with little or no room to walk around.

The bar itself (Fig. 41) is straight ahead of you when you walk in, tiled on top and down the front with purple and yellow tiles. At the foot of the bar, the 'footrest' (Fig. 42) consists of three rows of chrome bars that stretch the length of the bar at different heights. To compliment this, on the bartop, two sets of three beer taps (Fig. 43) sit, also chromed pipes, but this time with a brass plate screwed to the top of each. Apart from these, the bartop is clear apart from two vases of fresh lilies and a large glass bowl filled with lemons (Fig. 44), a feature which has been copied in *Thomas Reads*, an expensive "yuppie" bar on Dame Street in Dublin.

Behind the bar is not unlike the bar in the club with all the bottles of spirits lined up on the counter and a long display shelf above. The shelf (Fig. 45) consists of chrome tubes that rise from the counter to support the glass shelf and then bend backwards to the wall where they then bend upwards and outwards as lights that





illuminate the contents of the shelf, in this case bottles of Budweiser.







Fig.41 The Bar.

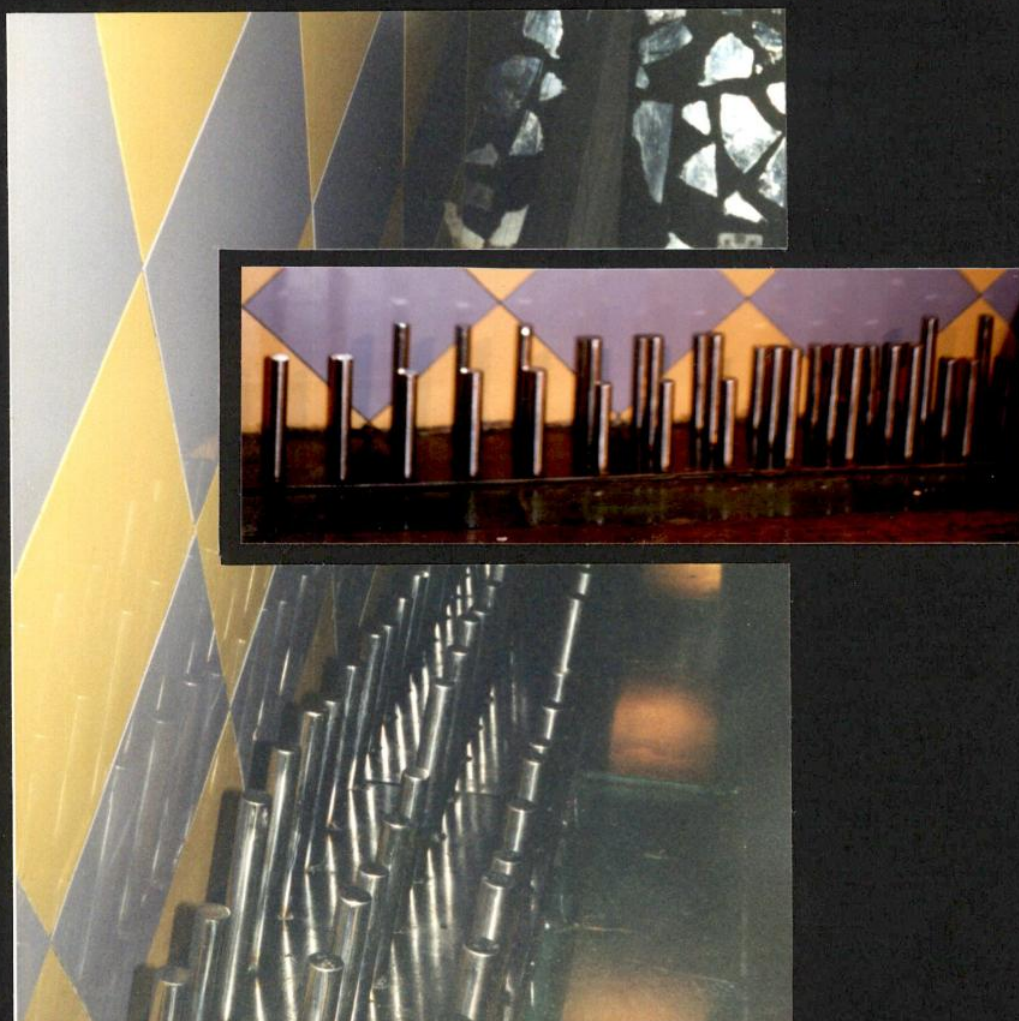


Fig.42 The 'footrests'.









Fig.43 Beer taps in the private bar.



Fig.44 Vase of lilies and bowl of lemons.







Fig.45 Shelf behind the private bar.







## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE ADAPTATION OF THE OLD BUILDING**

"If the space is good, you don't have to design within."  
(Poyner, 1988, p.24)

This was a statement made by Arribas about Velvet in Barcelona explaining why flamboyant devices had been used to correct deficiencies in the space of the nightclub. What you have with the POD is an already existing space created over 130 years ago which could not be changed without tremendous architectural endeavours, it being an old vault. This was the only problem which had to be designed around, and I say problem in the loosest sense of the word because the vault provides an excellent space and shape for a nightclub from a solid structural point of view and also for its soundproofing qualities.

The task then, was to design to that shape and to use the space available to create sub-spaces, hence the positioning of the ticket booth, cloakroom and offices in the pod structure at the entrance because the vault is rather narrow and if the contents of the pod structure were spread out around the club, it would compromise too much on the space available.

With the vault came the advantage of not having to worry about what colours to paint the walls etc. because the natural stone



provides the perfect starting point and the juxtaposition of colours and textures of the furniture blends well in creating the atmosphere in the POD.

Because it is not a new building where you can plan where wires are to go so that they can be hidden in the walls etc. and because of the mass of stone that makes up the vault, it would be a physical impracticality and impossibility to re-wire the space for electricity. Because of this, the metal pipes that house all the electrical cables are clearly visible running up and along the walls and ceiling branching off to their various lights and other electrical appliances like the cigarette machine and the cash registers. The ventilation system too, hangs ominously over the dancefloor surrounded by large speakers and disco lights.

The only thing that had to be done to the vault was a few holes drilled in the walls so that the drinks ledges could be attached and some holes drilled in the floor so that the tables that surround the dancefloor could be bolted in place.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### DYNAMO DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Apart from word of mouth, or the press, the only way that the atmosphere of a nightclub is conveyed is through its visual advertising using flyers, and this is the most important method. Everybody will give different reviews of a certain place or event, but the way that an establishment sees itself and sells itself is through the image it conveys with its flyers. Responsible for the flyers for the POD are *Dynamo Design Consultants*.

*Dynamo Design Consultants* was started by Jamie Helly, a graduate in Visual Communications from The College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square, Dublin. Himself and Phil Rafferty have been producing all of the flyers for the *POD*, since its opening, two years ago in 1993. Since then, Brian Williams and Brian Nolan, also graduates from Mountjoy Square have joined *Dynamo* and now, also design the flyers. They have all come from different working backgrounds, each working in music promotion and were in competition with each other so to speak, with Williams having worked for *Works Associates* designing for *U2's* promotions and Nolan having designed flyers for nightclubs such as *The Kitchen* and *Strictly Fish*, but now, ironically, they all work together designing for the *POD*.





In the beginning, there was a lot more time to work on the flyers, as can be seen from the quality of 'Absolut', 'Pure' and 'Horizontal' (Figs. 46, 47 & 48). These are top quality works, aimed at a very specific target group, the type of people who expect the best, who are willing to pay that little bit extra to experience the atmosphere of the *POD* and who want to be seen as having experienced it. What sets these flyers apart from the rest is the attention to detail, printed on A6 postcard size glossy card rather than the usual narrow strips of paper so commonly distributed around pubs, advertising cheap nights in other Dublin clubs. It is this attention to detail that the public associate with the club advertised on the flyer, and with the *POD*, they certainly get detail. They get the designer nightclub.

Although the likes of Thursday's 'Funky People' nights carried on the quality work of the previous flyers (Fig. 49), more and more gigs started to be advertised on larger A5 paper because the flyers were being distributed around to colleges and trendy shops where they needed to be seen. Because there was not a lot of time to do these, the nights being so spontaneous, the same amount of work and attention to detail could not be applied, hence the more to-the-point, cheaper look (Figs. 50-54). Besides, these flyers going to colleges and shops would end up like every other flyer - in the bin.

It was decided that a new approach had to be taken in order to keep the *POD*'s flyers fresh and original, so a number of clever ideas were adopted. Standard flyers got smaller again, the 'A.R.T.' one

1. The first part of the report discusses the general situation of the country and the progress of the work in the various departments. It also mentions the results of the recent elections and the state of the finances.

2. The second part of the report deals with the internal affairs of the country, including the state of the army and the navy, the condition of the public works, and the progress of the education system.

3. The third part of the report discusses the external relations of the country, including the state of the diplomatic relations with the various powers, the progress of the negotiations for the peace, and the results of the recent conferences.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the state of the economy, including the progress of the various industries, the condition of the agriculture, and the state of the commerce.

5. The fifth part of the report discusses the state of the public health, including the progress of the various medical services, the condition of the hospitals, and the results of the recent epidemics.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the state of the public morals, including the progress of the various moral reforms, the condition of the public order, and the results of the recent elections.

7. The seventh part of the report discusses the state of the public opinion, including the progress of the various public movements, the condition of the public sentiment, and the results of the recent elections.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the state of the public administration, including the progress of the various administrative reforms, the condition of the public services, and the results of the recent elections.

9. The ninth part of the report discusses the state of the public finance, including the progress of the various financial reforms, the condition of the public treasury, and the results of the recent elections.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the state of the public education, including the progress of the various educational reforms, the condition of the public schools, and the results of the recent elections.

W

£5.00

W E D N E S D A Y

# ABSOLUT

*Country of Pod*

# POD

*Innovative house beats and European dance rhythms  
with essential club favourites...and live theatre.*

*Denis at the door. 11 till late.*

P ● D

Fig.46 'Absolut'. Early A6 POD flyer style.





*f*

F R I D A Y

# *Purree*

*Jonathan Davis spins PURE dance beats  
from Happy not Heavy House tunes to  
massive garage & Italia anthems.*

*Denis at the door.*

*£ 6.00*

*11 till late.*

P ● D

Fig.47 'Pure'. Early A6 POD flyer style.









S U N D A Y

# H O R I Z O N T A L

Winging his way every Sunday from the  
U.K., D.J. Nick Peacock.

A laid back approach to end the week.

*It's up-tempo jazz.*

*It's solid soul.*

*It's rhythmic funk.*

11 till late.

Denis at the door.

£5.00

P O D

Fig.48 'Horizontal'. Early A6 POD flyer style.







T H U R S D A Y

# funky people

RHYTHMIC HOUSE AND FUNKY TUNES WITH CLASSIC CLUB GROOVES.

11 TILL LATE. DOOR £5.00 WITH THIS TICKET.

DENIS AT THE DOOR.

OLD HARCOURT TRAIN STATION, DUBLIN 2.

P ● D

Fig.49 'Funky People'. Early A6 POD flyer style.







T H U R S D A Y

# funky people

RHYTHMIC HOUSE AND FUNKY TUNES WITH CLASSIC CLUB GROOVES.

11 TILL LATE. DOOR £4.00 WITH THIS TICKET.

DENIS AT THE DOOR

OLD HARCOURT TRAIN STATION, DUBLIN 2.

P O D

Fig.50 'Funky People'. Larger A5 size flyer.







Thursday 29th July, Miller Beer Presents



# Sister Sledge

TICKETS £7.00 AT DOOR. RIGHT OF ADMISSION RESERVED

DENIS AT THE DOOR

OLD HARCOURT TRAIN STATION, DUBLIN 2.

POD

Fig.51 'Sister Sledge'. A5 size July flyer.









THURSDAY  
16 SEPTEMBER

Live appearance from

# Gwen Guthrie

'Ain't Nothing

Going On But The Rent'

Special Guest DJ:

**Gary String**

from Londons 'Carwash'  
and 'Absolutely Fabulous'

Playing 70's funky disco  
and club classics

Tickets £6.00 at the Door

Old Harcourt Train Station, Dublin2

Right of Admission Reserved

Denis at the Door

P O D

Fig.52 'Gwen Guthrie'. A5 size flyer.









The image shows three members of the band Sister Sledge standing against a vibrant, fiery background of orange and yellow flames. They are all wearing matching black leotards with white, puffy sleeves and have their signature voluminous red hair. The band's name, 'Sister Sledge', is written in a large, stylized, blue 3D font across the bottom of the image. Below the name is a small black oval logo containing the letters 'P O D'.

# Sister Sledge

P O D

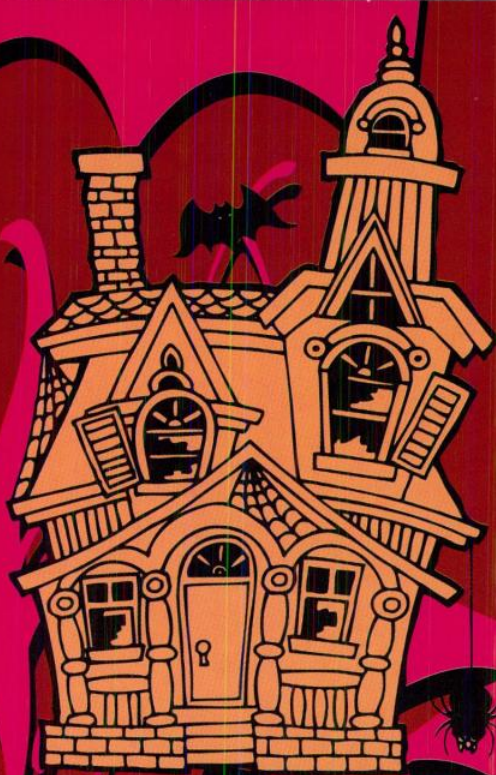
***Thursday 27th October.***

***Tickets £6.00 at the door, £5.00 with flyer.  
Denis at the door. Old Harcourt Train Station.***

Fig.53 'Sister Sledge'. A5 size October flyer.







Be Afraid, Be very Afraid...

# Halloween

at the

P O D

## Full Fancy Dress

Bank Holiday Dj's

*Jonathan Pleased Wimmin*  
*Paddy Pleased Men*

11 till bedtime

Beware! Denis at the Door...

*Old Harcourt Train Station*

Fig.54 'Halloween'. A5 size flyer.





(Fig. 55) being reduced to A7 size and then changed to a clever book cover type flyer, differently shaped and laminated to set it apart from any other flyers. This difference worked really well for a number of reasons. It did not get soggy on a wet bartop because of the lamination, it fit into a wallet, unlike the larger A5 flyers which just fit nicely into a bin and it was more clever for the simple fact that it opened - it was not just a flyer. The thinking behind this is that people keep the flyers because they appeal to them and if the flyer appeals to them then the club will also. These flyers are wallet size, so they will be looked at again and possibly shown to others rather than just glanced at and tossed aside.

Christmas and New Year is a hectic period for any nightclub and also a very competitive time. There is a lot of money to be made and so it is worthwhile spending time on advertising. *Dynamo's* idea was to present all of the Christmas and New Year flyers (Figs. 58 & 59) together in a cardboard matchbook of the same size, so the customer could go along to the *POD*, tear out the appropriate flyer and use it to get a concession on the entrance fee for that particular night. This idea of a multiple flyer is also used for four weeks of Wednesdays (Fig. 60) which, when folded up into a little square, fits nicely into a wallet and each night can then be torn off when the time comes.

It is these differences that sets the *POD* apart from other nightclubs and it is in this direction that *Dynamo* are going to continue, in their attempt not only to sell an event at a nightclub but to sell a





lifestyle. The public are getting more and more aware of graphic design in general through large advertising campaigns on the television and billboards etc. and can appreciate something good when they see it. This is why people appreciate the work of *Dynamo* and why so many people are attracted to the *POD*.





**A R T**

***Aquired Rythemic Taste***

***Guest Pass***

.....

**P O D**

Fig.55 'A.R.T'. New A7 size flyer.



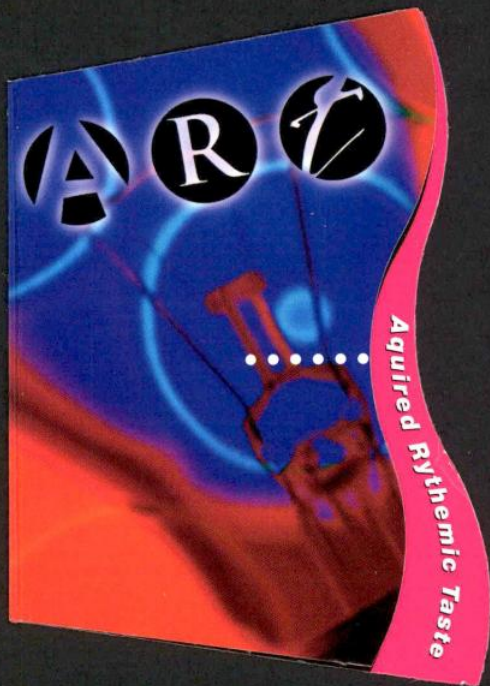
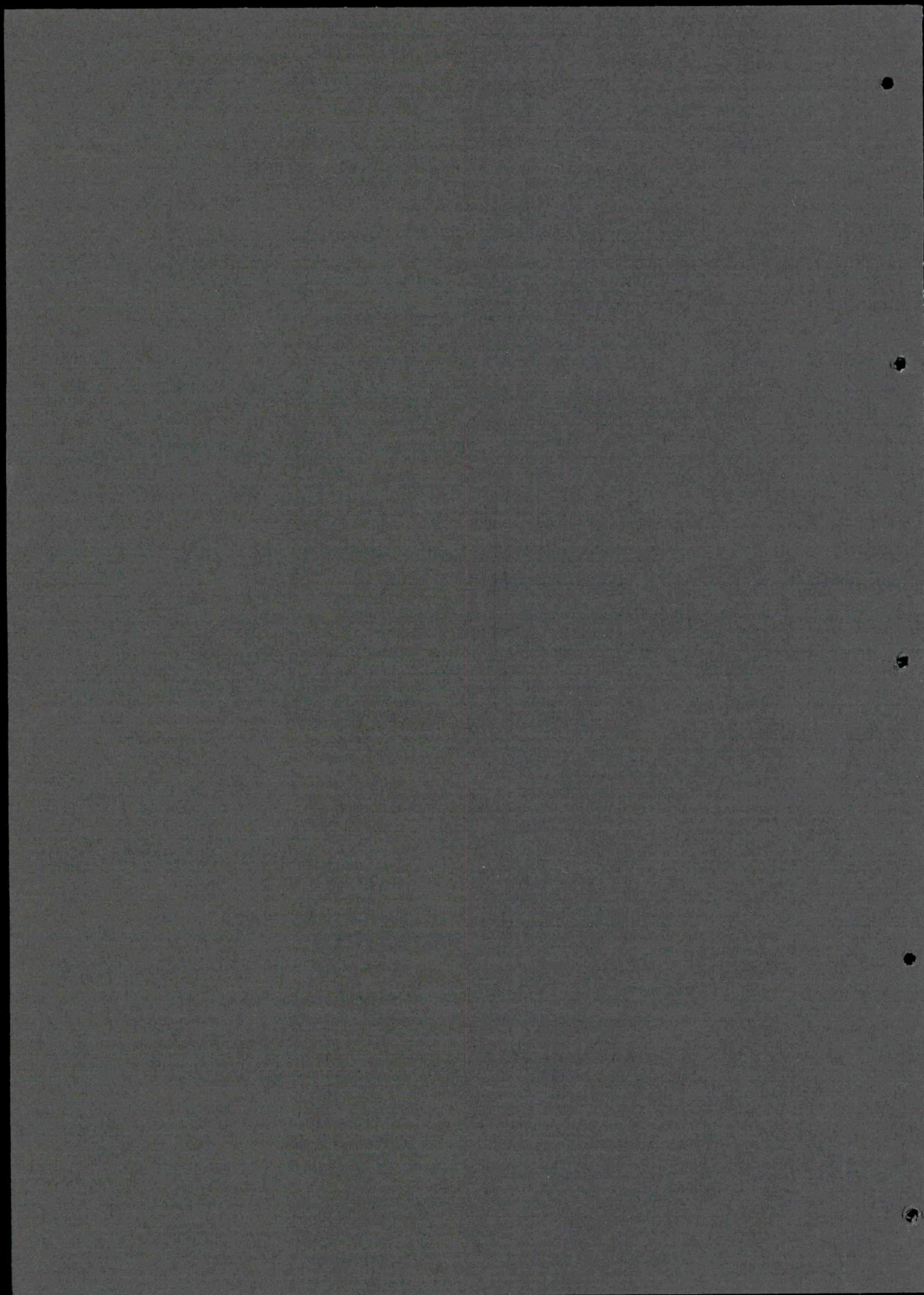


Fig.56 'A.R.T'. Book cover flyer (opens).









**Sunday Service** every **Sunday**  
11 till bedtime £4 before 12 with flyer

Fig.57 'Sunday Service' A7 flyer.





mon **26th**  
dec st. stephens night

**joe roberts** Live Appearance  
singing  
**"love is energy"**  
"back in my life"  
dj's jd & paddy sheridan  
**"lover"**

**11 till 4** £7 with Flyer £8 without

**dibov**  
his own style of house music

**11 till bedtime** £6 with flyer £7 without

**george**  
Tues: 27th

DJ Wayne Fitzgerald  
hosts

funky but chunky

the **KIT KAT** club

at the  
**THE CHOCOLATE BAR**

11 till bedtime

Carroll & Scannell  
play boom tunes & beats

**11 till bed**  
Denise at the door

Thurs: 29th

**wild**

Soul Celler THE CHOCOLATE BAR  
with DJ Eamon Slevin

Happy Not Heavy House Music

**A R T**

Fri: 30th  
£5 with flyer  
£6 without  
11 Till Bedtime  
Denise at the Door

Old Marcourt Street

Acquired Rhythmic Taste

SUNDAY SERVICE  
HANGOVER  
PARTY  
ADMISSION  
**FREE**  
with ticket  
1st jan 1995

Fig. 58 Six Christmas period flyers.





PLEASE PULL

**31st Dec. New Years Eve**  
**opens 9pm till 4am!**

Old Harcourt Street Train Station

and **no** we're **not** kidding

**o u t s i d e**

**full funfare**

- *giant ferris wheel*
- *heated Marquee*
- *candy floss*
- *pop corn machines*

**i n s i d e**



Dj's: **JD & Paddy Sheridan**



**indoor fireworks display**

**huge video wall**

decorated **environment**

**conversation room-cinema**

we **show** your **fave** films on the **big** screen

and **as** we're **not** kidding

**the chocolate bar**

Dj's: Wayne **Fitzgerald** &  
Eamon **Slevin**



spinning

**acid jazz,**  
**soul & funk**

plus **vast** celebrations

**tickets £12 before midnight £15 after**

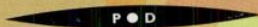


Fig.59 New Years Eve flyer.







Fig. 60 Multiple flyer.







## CONCLUSION

What we are dealing with here is a clash between the design world and the nightclub world. On one hand, the POD mirrors the details of so many designs of the past. From the broken tile mosaic, a typically Spanish tradition exploited by Gaudi's paving stones which have graced the streets of Barcelona since the turn of the century to the Philippe Starck furniture, not specifically designed for the POD, but merely 'designer items' inserted because of the preconcieved concepton that they are 'designer' but in fact are merely cliches of international Italian design. From the waterfall urinal, a quirky Starck rip-off seen as far back as the early eighties in the Royalton Hotel in New York and featured in practically every club in Barcelona to the ubiquitous red velvet drapes which act as cover-ups of bare walls everywhere.

On the other hand though, the POD is a benchmark for designer clubs in Dublin. It has brought the concept of the designer nightclub to the people of Dublin and for that alone it must be commended. Its innovative choice of location and integration of architecture and space, utilising an old building for a new purpose is not only an interesting idea but also an economical one and the spacial qualities of the vault have been maximised through clever design positioning. It is not the first time that a building in Dublin, having served it's original purpose, has been put to another use, in fact, the Law of Interchangeability of Buildings and Public Works ("Some purpose can be found for any Irish Building of any size or



type") has long been established here. A power station can become a motor assembly works (at Ringsend) and a fort and hotel can become a power station (at Pidgeon House). In fact, the lack of concern for the suitability of buildings for their function should really be expected here, seeing as we have police barracks dotted around the country which were originally designed for India, and a building that was intended for Washington which ended up as a certain building in the Phoenix park. There is, in fact a feeling that any building that has achieved the difficult feat of getting itself erected in the first place thereby acquires a prescriptive right to stay erected indefinitely. When it was known that the Harcourt Street line was to be closed, it was only to be expected that there would be suggestions that the station and line could be used for some other purpose, and ironically it was originally suggested that the station be transformed into a badly needed concert hall. Naturally, this suggestion never came to fruition, that is until the POD brought a new lease of life to the vaults of the old Harcourt Street railway station providing the public with today's equivalent of a concert hall, a nightclub. A designer nightclub.

The real tragedy of the situation is that whilst we gain a nightclub, we have lost out on a great railway line which provided transport to work for hundreds of people each day. It is interesting to note that the entire sum of money that came from the sale of the railway line i.e. every station on the line from Harcourt street to Bray, the line itself and all of the land only came to 150,000 pounds, the exact same price that John Reynolds paid to open the POD. So in





effect, disregarding the time difference, what has been lost in transport has been gained in entertainment.

It is true to say that the POD nightclub is derivative, but it is without a doubt, a lot more innovative. It is also true to say that Ron McCulloch utilised many features of the design boom in Barcelona in his design of the POD, but what he did was to bring to the attention of an Irish audience, the concept of the designer nightclub. An audience who would otherwise still be ignorant of the Barcelona experience. The POD has rejuvenated the old limestone vaults of the Harcourt Street railway station and in doing so has given the youth of Dublin a design experience through designer entertainment.





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