

The background is a dark, textured surface with numerous small, bright white dots scattered across it, resembling a starry night sky or a digital data field. Several prominent, bright white streaks of light originate from the bottom left corner and fan out towards the top right, creating a sense of dynamic movement and depth. The text is overlaid on this background in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Night Fever

Designing  
Club Culture

1960 – Today



# Colophon

This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition  
*Night Fever. Designing Club Culture 1960–Today*

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Nightclubs and discotheques are hotbeds of contemporary culture. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, they have been centres of the avant-garde that question social norms and experiment with different realities, merging interior and furniture design, graphics and art with sound, light, fashion, and special effects to create a modern *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

*Night Fever. Designing Club Culture 1960 – Today* is the first book to offer a comprehensive overview of the design history of the nightclub, examining its cultural context and international scope. Examples range from the Italian clubs of the 1960s created by the protagonists of Radical Design to the legendary Studio 54 where Andy Warhol was a regular and the Palladium in New York, designed by Arata Isozaki, as well as more recent concepts by architecture studio OMA for the Ministry of Sound II in London. Featuring films and vintage photographs, posters, flyers, and fashion, *Night Fever* takes the reader on a fascinating journey through a world of glamour, subculture, and the search for the night that never ends.

# Total Space

## Pol Esteve



1 → Text of the invitation as reproduced in an article cut out of the Italian newspaper *L'Espresso*, undefined date, c. 1969, preserved in the Carmenatí family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia.

Oriol Regàs and Alberigo Crocetta are honoured to invite you to the party that will be held in the Piper Club, Rome, next Friday 4 October at 10 p.m., where the Spanish dancer Antonio Gades will perform.<sup>1</sup>

This invitation, extended in 1968, hints at a series of international links that would foster advanced architectural experimentation in the second half of the twentieth century. An interconnected group of European promoters, architects, and engineers developed a pioneering architectural project in relation to social dance. Characterised by the incorporation of new architectural devices and advanced technologies, their work envisioned a new kind of spatial experience. Their collective project explored new perceptual environments, which radically challenged the way space was thought about. They designed an unprecedented phenomenological-spatial apparatus that became a catalyst for rethinking the position of the individual in post-industrial society.

In order to explain the emergence of this spatial practice and its social implications, this essay will look at the people, places, and mechanisms that made this process possible. Concretely, the text presents one pioneering project which, in both its process of spatial production and its later impact, represents a paradigmatic example to understand this worldwide phenomenon.

### The invitation

The story starts in the region of the Mediterranean Sea. The invitation was extended to the regulars of Bocaccio, a nightclub inaugurated in Barcelona in 1967. Bocaccio was *the* place to be seen for the emerging bourgeois liberal left by the end of the Franco regime. Luxurious, the club was located in an underground space on Muntaner Street, which at the time, as an up-and-coming area full of restaurants and clubs, enabled postmodern architectural experimentation. Bocaccio was a space with low tables and plenty of velvet. It was a traditional club devoted to socialising, listening to bands, watching performances, and dancing. Oriol Regàs, who was one of the co-hosts named on the invitation, was Bocaccio's owner and also a prominent personality in the progressive intellectual spheres of the time. He invited the clientele of his club to travel to one of the pioneering venues in Europe: the Piper Club in Rome. Alberigo Crocetta, the other co-host, was also co-owner of the Roman club, where he welcomed the Barcelonans with the famous contemporary flamenco dancer Antonio Gades.

The Piper had opened two years earlier in 1965. It was the first of a series of innovative spaces devoted to the "performative turn" in arts and music that spread throughout Italy in the late 1960s. The club hailed the contemporary vision of public venues: a multipurpose space with a flexible interior composed of movable furniture, platforms, and decor. The flexibility of the space worked in a way similar to a theatrical black box, permitting all kinds of events, art exhibitions, theatre plays, and gigs (including some by the famous Patty Pravo). As the Italian paper *L'Espresso* chronicled, on that night in October 1968, the visiting Barcelonans could expect to encounter "a sumptuous dance with valets in multi-coloured costumes; two or three bands, discs, long-legged girls with glittering eyes, efficiently cheerful in their decadence".<sup>2</sup>

2 → Ibid.

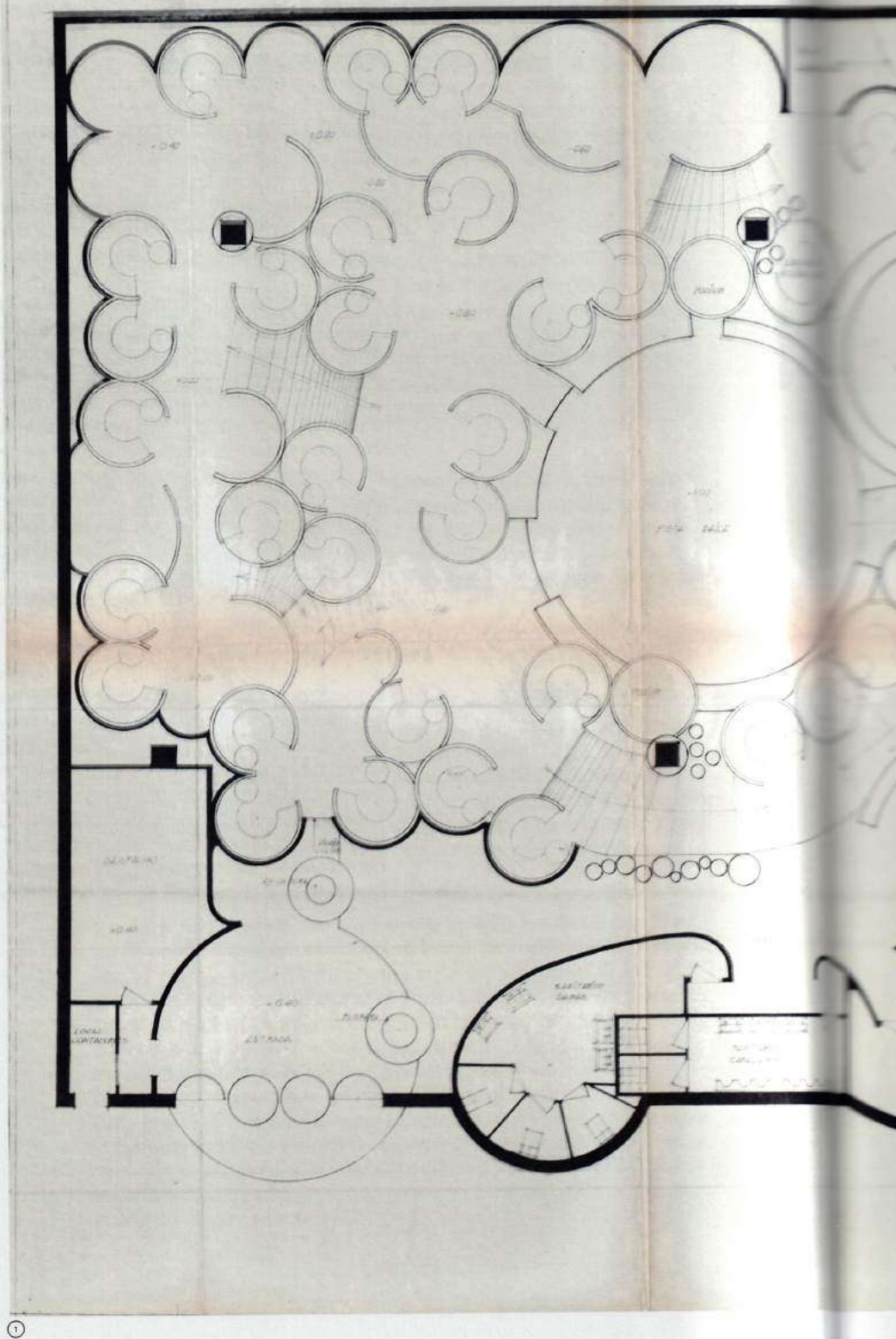
### Social dance

It is not clear how Crocetta and Regàs, the owners of two of Italy and Spain's most fashionable clubs, got to know each other. A possible connection was the architect and mutual friend Vincenzo Carmenati. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s both Regàs and Crocetta developed several projects with him. Born in Milan in 1931, Carmenati studied at the Politecnico di Milano, where he was taught by Piero Portaluppi. Following the end of the Second World War, Carmenati moved to Venezuela, assisted by his teacher. Influenced by both Portaluppi's work and America's tropical landscape, he developed a sensuous take on modernism that combined fluid tectonics with stimulating materials. In the early 1960s he returned to Milan, and founded a studio called Organizzazione Tecnico Immobiliaria or OTIM. Soon after the studio was established, OTIM received a commission to build a housing block in Platja d'Aro on Spain's Costa Brava. This brought Carmenati to the coast of the Mediterranean, and also put him in contact with Regàs, Crocetta, and a fourth important player in the game, the Italian engineer Cesare Fiorese.

Platja d'Aro was a picturesque seaside village in the early 1960s, a small fishing port, then only recently discovered by tourism. Every summer, it was invaded by an international crowd eager for freedom and new experiences—making it the perfect testing ground for Carmenati. Initially, Carmenati built housing and commercial projects there, but by the mid-1960s he had received a different kind of commission: a nightclub. Behind the commission was Eladi Balletvó, a local entrepreneur, who envisioned a space focused on social dancing. The club was to be built next to a swimming pool and a grill bar that already existed, and the idea was that the complex could be open twenty-four hours a day. The dance club required a provocative design, which gave Carmenati total freedom for experimentation. The project was developed during 1965/66, and opened to the public in 1967 under the name of Maddox.

Maddox was a low, single-storey building with a flat roof. Made of stone and brick, the windowless façade was composed of simple geometrical forms ③. This striking but fairly conventional exterior was offset by a radically innovative interior. Inside, the spatial experience would be produced mainly through non-static elements, rather than conventional immobile architectural objects. Carmenati designed a fluid space in which even tectonic elements represented an anti-gravitational approach. As the section that follows explains, the combined tectonic and ethereal materials presented Maddox as a new kind of architectural space, one defined by sensory exaltation.

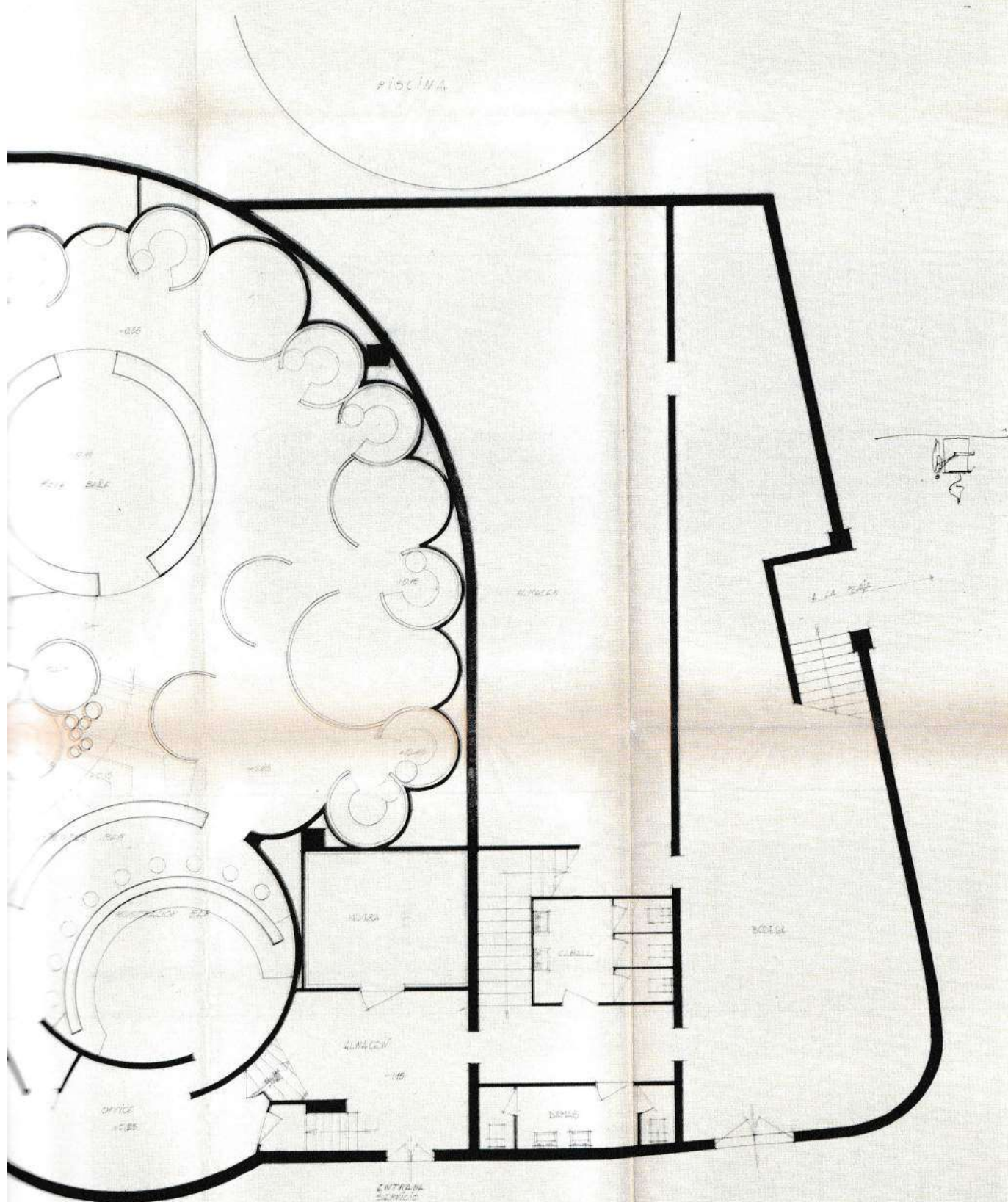




① Floor plan of Maddox, Vincenzo Carmenati, Milan, 1967.

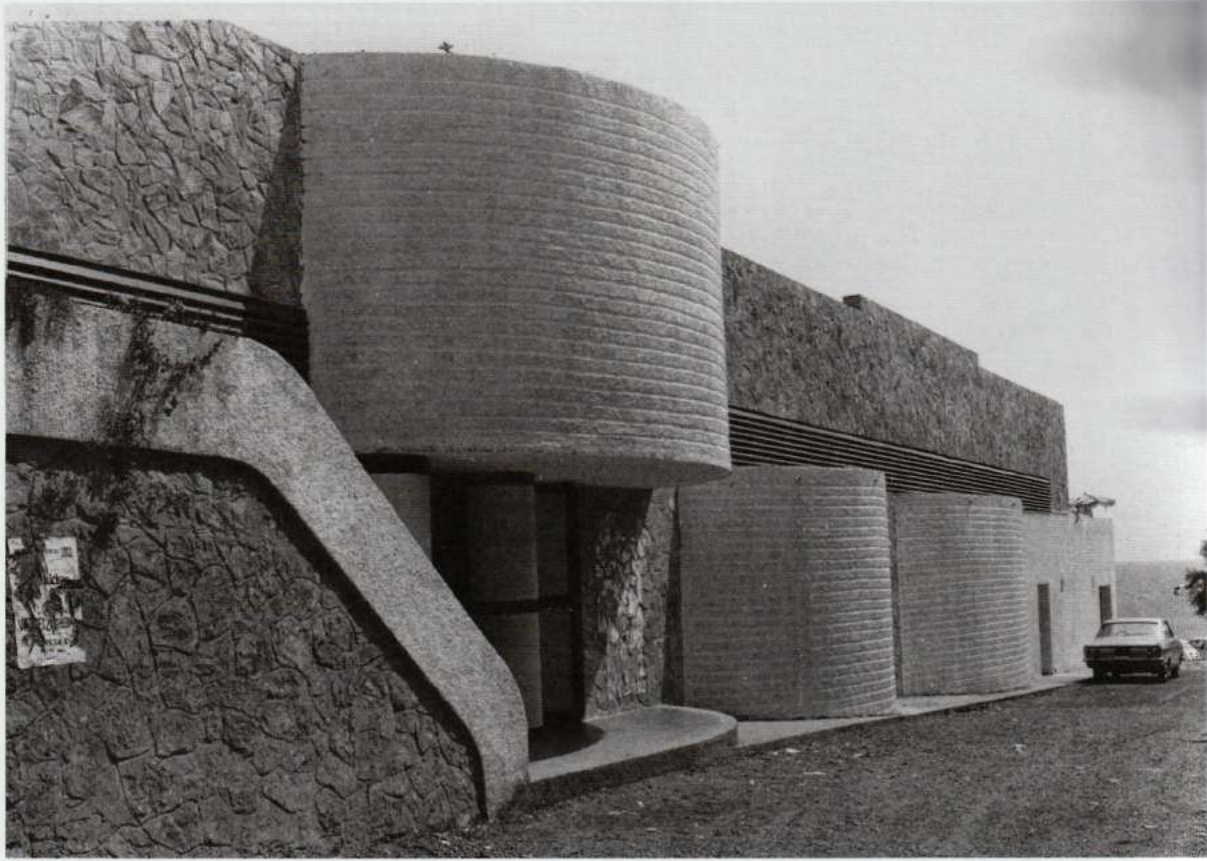
Floor plan of Maddox, Vincenzo Carmenati, Milan, 1967.



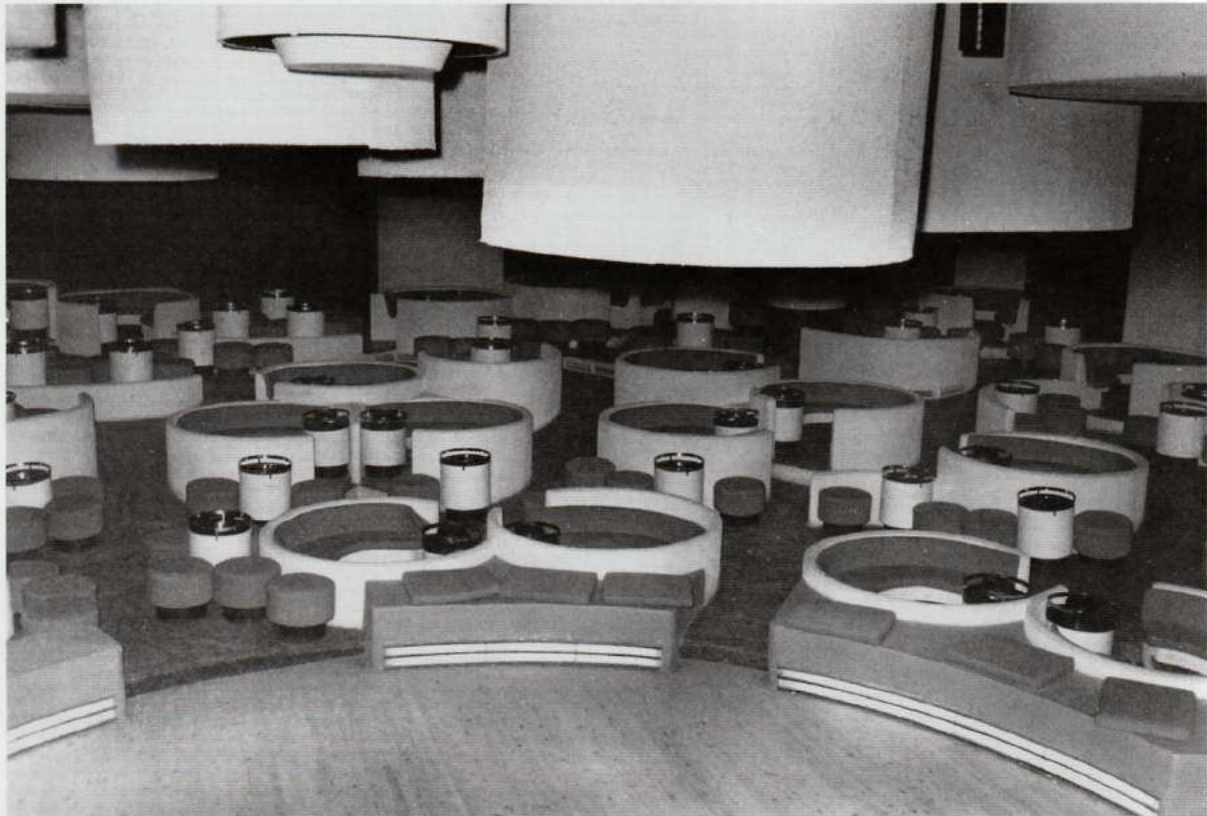


SALA DE FIESTAS — MADDIX —  
 EN PLAYA DE ARO GERONA PLANTA BAJA - 1.50  
 MILANO - '67 ARQUITECTO



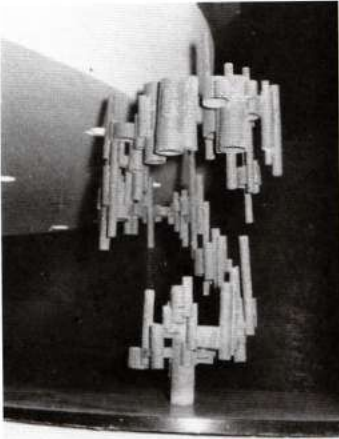


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④

3 → Article cut out of an unidentified French newspaper, c.1967, preserved in the Carmenati family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia.

4 → Ibid.

## Grotto

A sculpture made by Carmenati, which was positioned at the club entrance, exemplified his design concept ④. The piece could easily be a model for the building, resembling an exploded grotto, or as a French newspaper put it, "a drop of blood enlarged a million times".<sup>3</sup> An accumulation of suspended cylindrical elements, like stalactites, created a flowing space without a clear perimeter. With its affirmation of a spatial continuity and use of free-standing elements, the sculpture appears reminiscent of neoplasticism, yet its curves denote a rejection of orthogonality. The singularity of the plane was diluted within the multiplicity of the cylindrical. On arrival, the organic-constructivist sculpture announced to the public a space with a centre, but with no cardinal directions, having neither top nor bottom, back nor front.

Once inside, the transposition from the sculptural model to the building was rather literal. Revellers encountered a curving and predominantly white interior made of plaster-coated brick. A series of circles defined different seating areas, fixed circular sofas for small groups of people, alongside circular stools that could be freely moved around. At the edges were a couple of bars with undulating counters, which mirrored the wavy walls behind them. The largest open area was a circular surface for dancing, placed in a central hollow position ①.

The curves extended to the ceiling, where the most impressive forms appeared, in a series of cylinders of different heights and diameters ②③. A French journalist described it as a "massive squadron of white cheeses, comparable to a disembarkation of Martians".<sup>4</sup> This free aggregation of volumes, along with the multilevelled surfaces, movable furniture, and the emptiness of the dance floor at the club's core, made manifest the unstable and centrifugal space of Carmenati's sculpture.

## Wave design

A few months after its inauguration, the club was bought from Balletvó by Oriol Regàs and a couple of other investors. Bocaccio, Regàs's other club, had just opened in Barcelona, but he was immediately fascinated by Carmenati's design. Maddox, which was nothing like the traditional Bocaccio, presented a radically different space. Regàs introduced a series of improvements, some of which were immediately obvious, such as the enlargement of the dance floor, carried out with Carmenati; some were less obvious at first sight, completed with the help of Cesare Fiorese, who was the fourth important personality, thereby closing the Regàs, Crocetta, and Carmenati circle.

After the highly successful reopening of the club in 1968, it was soon noticeable to the dance club's visitors that, despite the express flamboyance of the interior, it was not the shape and arrangement of the brick and plaster elements that made Maddox an unprecedented kind of space. Nor was it its multifunctionality or futuristic style. The element that made the space of Maddox unique at the time, which is virtually invisible in any documentation and near-impossible to capture in photography or film, was the design of the light and sound systems. Regàs, Carmenati, and Fiorese installed two types of electronic technology, fixed and camouflaged, in the club's ceiling and walls ⑤, and it was their implementation that made Maddox an example of pioneering and technologically advanced spatial practice.



⑤

- ② Entrance façade of Maddox nightclub in Platja d'Aro, Spain, opened 1967.
- ③ Interior view of Maddox, 1967.
- ④ Sculpture by Vincenzo Carmenati at the entrance to Maddox.
- ⑤ Interior views of Maddox, 1967.





6

Behind the design of the light and sound system was Fiorese. Aged forty-one at the time of Maddox's opening, he had already gained expertise in environmental electronics with previous projects, having been involved in Italy's experimental theatre scene and designed the lighting for clubs including Boom-Boom in Milan and the Piper in Rome, the latter being where he was probably first introduced to Crocetta.

The lighting technologies at Maddox were large in number and complex. There was a centralised electronic system that controlled 200 lighting devices, including stroboscopic lights, lasers, UV lights, special slide-projector machines, and a diversity of other machinery to produce visual effects. In 1967 such technological deployment was undeniably innovative; most of the devices, while common today, were not industrially produced at the time.

Some of the lighting technologies—like the stroboscopic light, the UV light, or laser—had existed before, but their initial application had a totally different purpose. Invented in the 1930s, UV and stroboscopic technologies were used initially for the scientific study of moving elements and skin therapies, respectively. Laser technology, which became a reality in 1960 after decades of theoretical speculation, was used initially for scientific research in the field of physics. It was only at the end of the 1960s that the full potential of these technologies was starting to be exploited architecturally.

Some of Maddox's lighting elements had to be imported, as they were still not commercially available in Spain: the stroboscopic lights came from New York<sup>5</sup> and the laser lights were imported from Paris.<sup>6</sup> A series of lighting machines were specially produced by an engineering company called Lumex, which was based in Barcelona.

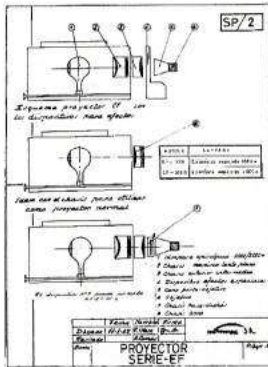
5 → Ibid.

6 → Oriol Regàs, *Los Años Divinos*. Barcelona: Destino, 2010, p. 98.

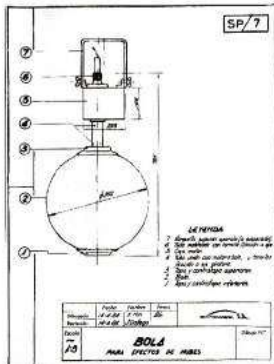
- ⑤ The light and sound system at Maddox was integrated into the ceiling, 1968.
- ⑥ Episcopo for Maddox, designed 1962.
- ⑦ Projector to generate cloud effects, designed 1964.
- ⑧ Projector to generate water effects, designed 1965.
- ⑨ Horizon lamp, designed 1965.



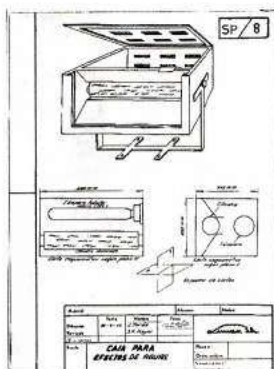
7 → Article cut out of *Usted* magazine, c. 1968, p. 48, preserved in the Carmenati family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia.



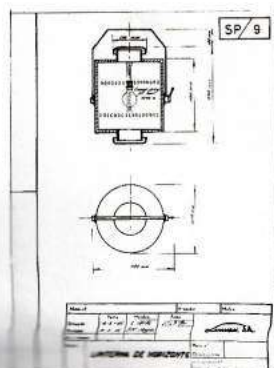
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Carmenati's archive contains technical drawings relating to some of these devices, all of them designed between 1962 and 1965. The oldest of these is an episcopic projector that used a system similar to that of a slide machine; it allowed a silhouette to be inserted into the projected ray of light to modulate it and produce light forms (7). Another device, designed in 1964, was used to produce "cloud effects". This was composed of a circular ball, with an opaque and a clear surface, which had a light source inside it to project cloud-like shapes (8). Two other devices were designed in 1965: a box to create water effects and a lantern to simulate a horizon. In the water-effect box, the light went through a perforated cylinder that shaped it into watery-looking patterns (9). The horizon lamp was a very simple instrument, containing a row of holes on a cylindrical surface that projected a horizontal line of light (10).

These four quite primitive instruments were the heirs of similar devices previously used in theatres and dioramas, and they exemplify a broader, growing interest in experimenting with light in order to create an interior ambience. At Maddox these technologies were used in conjunction with the much more sophisticated systems that were the result of scientific advances—UV, stroboscopic, and laser light. Together, all of these made possible a new kind of lighting spectacle. What is more, instead of projecting light onto a screen or a stage, as in a cinema or theatre, the light waves were inverted and, surprisingly, projected onto the audience.

Fiorese also designed an advanced sound system for Maddox. The quantity and power of the speakers used there, outstripped the sound system of any other venue at the time: at Maddox there were six loudspeakers suspended above the dance floor and twelve complementary columns of loudspeakers distributed around the space. Together, these provided high-intensity sound widely across the audible range. They included subwoofers, a particular kind of loudspeaker that permitted the emission of sound waves in the lowest frequencies, and whose first patent had been granted only three years earlier in the United States. Its invention made possible for the first time the reproduction of the lower tones of recorded music.

Two further systems for sound reproduction featured at Maddox: vinyl and magnetic tape. Magnetic tape was a common recording- and reproduction system at the time. It facilitated the first experiments in musical composition using recorded sounds, which would have an impact on the emergence of dance-music genres such as house music. Vinyl, which had existed for almost a century, eventually became the medium par excellence on which to play dance music. As the press reported,<sup>7</sup> the vinyl records played at Maddox arrived directly from New York and London. Two turntables were used in parallel to link songs without interruption: a continuous flow of recorded music created an endless sonic atmosphere with the freshest beats.

Carmenati paid special attention to the design of the decks, which were housed in a booth, and contained not only the mechanisms for playing music but for controlling the lighting as well. Described on a floor plan as the "table of the operator", the decks were circular in shape, designed to merge with all the other elements in the club (11). Another drawing, this time an elevation, depicts the DJ at work. The booth had a series of buttons, dimmers, and switches that enabled the DJ—or in Carmenati's terms "the operator"—to accurately regulate the atmosphere: a multisensory spatial experience created from sound- and light waves could be activated simply by pressing a button. *Whoever controlled the technologies became the co-designer of the space* (12).





In addition to light and sound, a third micro-technology was crucial to the production of the spatial experience at Maddox. It was not part of Carmenati and Fiorese's design and could not be controlled from the "table of the operator", although it did influence the design of its special effects and was ever-present at Maddox. This third category of technologies was chemical in nature; also known as "psychotropic technologies", due to their effect on a person's perception. In other words, recreational drugs.

Like today, these psychotropic technologies consisted of a series of chemical substances, both organic and synthetic, to produce a mood-altering effect. While there are many different kinds of psychotropic technologies producing diverse effects, the synesthetic properties of some of these have been particularly relevant to the evolution of social dance spaces. Three drugs were predominant at the time and most probably freely available at Maddox: mescaline, lysergic acid diethylamide—or LSD, and amphetamine. In late-1960s Spain there was a permissive law controlling psychoactive substances. Mescaline and LSD, which were available in Spain by 1967, grew in popularity due to an interest in the cultural and philosophical implications of their consumption.<sup>8</sup> Amphetamines were legal at the time and were sold in pharmacies. All of these substances, despite their differences, provide a chemical framework for an intensified experience of space. As their chemical components interact with the brain by modifying neurotransmitters and brainwaves, they typically provoke an alteration of the perceptual processes and the cognitive system. If psychotropic technologies are experienced at the same time as the person is being subjected to the effects of light and sound technologies, an exponential increase in the effects of all the components is felt, compared to when the three are experienced separately. Perceptions of colour, form, and time, among other perceptive parameters, are altered. Not only is the space itself perceived differently, but with light- and sound technologies designed specifically to intensify the effect of the psychoactive mediators, an individual is immersed in a constantly changing space where beams of light and musical rhythms, combined with psychotropic drugs, produce an extra-real dimension.

8 → Almost coinciding with the opening of Maddox, in April 1967, the renowned Spanish magazine *Revista de Occidente* published an article by Antonio Escohotado titled "Hallucinogens and the Everyday World". The text addressed the physiological, cultural, and philosophical implications of the consumption of psychoactive drugs, which had an important impact on the use of recreational drugs in Spain.

<sup>11</sup> Plan of the "Table of the operator" at Maddox, 1967.

<sup>12</sup> DJ booth ("Table of the operator") at Maddox to control music and light, 1967



- 9 → Page from an unidentified Spanish magazine, c. 1968, preserved in the Carmenati family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia.
- 10 → Article cut out of an unidentified Spanish newspaper, c. 1968, preserved in the Carmenati family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia. See also Vincenzo Carmenati, *Carmenati*. Platja d'Aro: OTIM, 2013, unpaginated (n.p.), on stroboscopic light.
- 11 → Article cut out of an unidentified French newspaper, c. 1968, preserved in the Carmenati family archive, Platja d'Aro, Catalonia.
- 12 → Ibid.

13 → Ibid.

14 → Ibid.

15 → Regàs, *Los Años Divinos*, 2010.

## Super-psychedelic

The impact of psychotropic technologies on the whole spatial experience is evident in the multiple press reviews that described Maddox as a psychedelic space. Press headlines, such as "The Super-Psychedelic Costa Brava"<sup>9</sup> followed the inauguration of Maddox. Other articles affirmed that Spain's coast reached "the highest psychedelic state with the opening of Maddox, one of the most formidable 'boîtes' of the Mediterranean Sea".<sup>10</sup> Maddox was seen as a space that provoked the same effect as psychoactive substances. Common to all reports was a fascination with the new psychedelic experience <sup>(13)</sup><sup>(14)</sup>. One French newspaper highlighted how "the shadow competes with the gloom and the electric flashes are measured with the rhythm of the music".<sup>11</sup> A Spanish publication described how "a myriad of light beams and intermittent flickers produce effects of the more depurated phantasmagorical style".<sup>12</sup>

Such interpretations were shared by the club's owners. Regàs described the opening event as "an esoteric night, convulsive, disquieting, maddening, sassy, impudent, discordant, incongruous, disjointed". The last adjective seems to refer to the lighting; one newspaper reported Regàs as saying that light "when flickering at [a] certain rhythm, produces the effect of an old film by eliminating the continuity of the movement. The result is the creation of a syncopated ambience, overwhelming, when shifting from the absolute darkness to a dazzling clarity."<sup>13</sup> Sound also contributed to the psychedelic experience: it was reported that Maddox offered the "most suffocating sonority required for the psychedelic state".<sup>14</sup> Some years later, a then quite elderly Regàs would describe Maddox in three words—"white pulsating box".<sup>15</sup> Even when not under the influence of psychotropic technologies one was assured a psychedelic experience at Maddox, but when chemicals were involved too, then the affect could reach a disorienting level of intensity.

Together, Carmenati, Fiorese, Regàs, and the light- and sound-tech set-up operator were the designers of a new spatial experience, one that challenged the modern conception of "space" in the architectural realm. When Maddox opened its doors, the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion was working on a history of "space", which was published in 1971 under the title *Architecture and the Phenomena of Transition: The Three Space Conceptions in Architecture*. Giedion divided the history of architecture into three spatial stages: The first existed up until the Romans, which was when exterior space was predominant; the second lasted until the modern movement, defined by the interior's status as the focus of architecture; finally, there was the modern movement, when interior and exterior merge in a spatial continuity.

The notion of space that Giedion had used for his research had been central to architectural discourse since the eighteenth century, when it was incorporated into architectural theory as a consequence of the development of instruments of representation, such as the use of perspective, as well as conceptual constructs brought into play by the emerging areas of the natural sciences and German philosophy. Space had become a stable category informing the discourse and practice of architecture. It was commonly understood as measurable and Cartesian, two qualities that necessarily prioritised the visual sense. A single eye—as often represented in perspectival drawings—would perceive space under stable, permanently lit conditions, and thus be able to recognise its volume and position.



13



14





15

16 → Carmenati, *Carmenati*, 2013, n.p.

17 → An account of institutional research on the perceptive and psychical effects of stroboscopic light can be found in John Geiger, *Chapel of Extreme Experience*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2003.



16

This conceptualisation of space did not match that promoted at Maddox. The club did not fall within any of Giedion's periods, and neither did it fall into any of the categories of space upon which his analysis was based. The interior and exterior were not connected—there were no other openings beyond the entrance doors. Once inside, however, the sensation was of a continuous infinite space, a feeling enhanced by Regàs's decision to have the interior walls painted black, in contrast to the lighting, and ceiling-suspended white volumes <sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, the combination of the moving and flickering lights, sound vibrations, and chemicals provoked a spatial experience that was difficult to measure. The interior space of Maddox was not Cartesian and nor was it perceived exclusively visually, but corporally as well. It was not a stable element, but a time-based construct; a temporal dimension, which Giedion had hinted at, but had not developed in his book. As Carmenati would write shortly before he died: at Maddox, "the perspective vanishes on a mental space where cause and effect define complementary performances".<sup>16</sup> Maddox offered a spatial experience where the effects of technologies were not only perceived in space but also affected the way that space was perceived.

People and their bodies took on a central role in the production of this new type of space. The public was both audience and protagonist, and the individual body was at the epicentre of the experience. Light and sound waves were projected directly at the body. This had an effect on the brain function of individuals. Experiments carried out in European and American universities<sup>17</sup> in the 1940s and 1950s showed how exposure to flickering light was able to induce alpha waves in the brain, and how heightened presence of these neural oscillations can connect different areas of the brain and engender experiences of transcendent beauty.

These mental effects were further enhanced by the auditory and haptic experience of the sound system in the club. In addition to the effects of the stereo system, the subwoofer produced wide wavelength sounds that could be felt inside the body. This somatic sensation, which manifested first on the skin's surface and then within the body's cavities, was felt chiefly in the interior of the abdomen. Finally, psychotropic substances were literally introduced into the body. The hallucinogenic and stimulating effects of the drugs taken by clubgoers at Maddox turned the body into the instrument of expanded spatial experience <sup>16</sup>.

- 15 Interior view of Maddox.
- 16 Dancer in ecstasy on the dance floor in Maddox, 1968.
- 17 One evening in Maddox.



17

### The Wagnerian dream

At its opening, Maddox became not only a unique example of technologically infused, perception-bending architecture, but also represented a model for a spatial practice that would later be replicated worldwide. Maddox, along with other venues in the village in the 1960s, embodied the hedonistic liberation that Ibiza and many international metropolises would represent a decade later. Platja d'Aro pioneered the combination of Mediterranean vacation and personal evasion that was popularised in the 1970s and 1980s; it was where locals and foreigners came together to celebrate social emancipation in the last days of the repressive Spanish dictatorship. Oral histories recount how people from all over Europe came to Platja d'Aro to enjoy the nightlife and open spirit for which it had become well known.<sup>18</sup> In the words of Carmenati, at that time in Platja d'Aro "the heart of a future city was beating for a participatory experience, a white page to express the unspeakable".<sup>19</sup>

18 → Platja d'Aro's local oral histories about the emergence of dance clubs and recreational tourism have been compiled by Xavier Castellón, *Nit d'Aro. Platja d'Aro: Ajuntament de Castell Platja d'Aro*, 2014.  
19 → Carmenati, *Carmenati*, 2013, n.p.

Carmenati's predictions are echoed in a text, written ten years after Maddox opened, by the French semiotician Roland Barthes. Barthes visited a Parisian dance club called Le Palace in 1978. It was an old theatre converted into a dance hall where—like Maddox—light, sound, pharmaceuticals, and bodies came together to create a radical experience. There, Barthes saw the "appearance of a new art, in its material (a mobile light) and in its practice; for this is actually a public art, in that it is achieved among the public and not in front of it, and a total art (the old Greek and Wagnerian dream), where scintillation, music, and desire unite".<sup>20</sup> In other words, Barthes saw how the introduction of new technologies would create a public and total art, or, one could say in relation to social dance spaces, a public and *total* space.

20 → Roland Barthes, *Incidents*. Paris: Aux Éditions du Seuil, 1987, p. 67.  
21 → Carmenati, *Carmenati*, 2013, n.p.

Carmenati designed "new forms, new light, for new music in Maddox [...] where the new youths look(ed) for an international identity".<sup>21</sup> The electronically and chemically inflicted "waves" were aimed at bringing about not only a new kind of space, but also a new understanding of the post-war, post-industrial, and postmodern subject in an internationally connected context. On any normal night at Maddox over a thousand people would surrender to the effects of the *total*



22 → Douglas Crimp, *Disss-co (A Fragment): From Before Pictures, A Memoir of 1970s New York*, in the series "Greater New York". New York: MoMA, 2016, p. 5.



18

23 → *Jouissance* is a term originally coined by Jacques Lacan, which Roland Barthes frequently uses to refer to a type of pleasure which works from a basis of corporal materiality. An approach to the Barthesian conceptual definition of *jouissance* in relationship to music can be found in Frédéric Sounac, "Fragments d'une jouissance sonore. Expérience musicale et sexualité chez Roland Barthes", in Nenad Ivić and Maja Vukušić Zorica (eds), *Barthes. Création, émotion, jouissance*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017.

24 → The latter opening before the one in Ibiza by the same name and with the same owner.

space<sup>17</sup>. The accumulation of bodies created a collective experience that had social and political consequences. Douglas Crimp, an American art critic, reflected on his exposure to New York's dance scene in the late 1970s: "[W]hat would it be like if we were somehow able to produce ecstasy synthetically?" he asked. "If we were able to just plug ourselves into a machine that would produce pleasure?"<sup>22</sup> Was that not exactly what Maddox had achieved? Maddox was an architectural space capable of producing bodily pleasure. Mediated by synthetic molecules and exposure to light and sound waves, the body acquired an erotic-synthetic dimension. Sensual pleasure would spread to all parts of the body, ultimately also modulating an individual's cognitive state. At peak moments, when the music was louder and the lights brighter, thought dissolved into a fluid Lacanian *jouissance*.<sup>23</sup> The sensation resembles an orgasm. Multiple in most cases, repeated again and again, in time to the cyclical peaks of intensity of music and light. It was like making love in the abstract. It was neither a genital act nor an act of a couple, but a non-carnal experience involving multiple bodies<sup>18</sup>. This spatial disposition achieved a collective eroticisation that expanded the limits of its affect. It was a communal orgasm, imploding in the individual body to give it a new meaning.

Maddox, as with many of the spaces for high-tech social dance that followed, would become an instrument of social emancipation. The dance clubs of Platja d'Aro were like decompression chambers for the emerging consumer society. It was precisely in the decade after Maddox opened that the term biopolitics was popularised by Michel Foucault, and when minorities were finally recognised as political subjects. It was in this decade that the techno-experienced body became politically charged, and the focus of the debate switched to the sexual, racial, and productive emancipation that defined the intellectual panorama at the end of the twentieth century. As Herbert Marcuse had claimed in the 1950s, the body had to be re-eroticised in order to overcome the repression of a machinist age. Maddox, by reassigning physical and intellectual meaning to the body, was a catalyst for the redefinition of the political and social status of the individual in the twenty-first century.

### Piper 2000

Maddox was the most spectacular nightclub in Platja d'Aro, but not the only one; other venues, like Tiffany's or Pacha<sup>24</sup> proposed a similar spatial mechanism aimed at producing an intensified sensual experience. Platja d'Aro and Spain were not exclusive founts of the phenomenon, however, but shared the project with other pioneers, including Mach II, designed by Superstudio, which opened the same year in Florence, and others that were operating at around the same time, like Whisky à Gogo in Paris, the Scotch Club near Cologne, The Fillmore in San Francisco, and the Electric Circus in New York, to mention but a few.

Among all of them though, Maddox was an exceptional example: with an unforeseen technological sophistication, the Catalan nightclub was the model for the immediate expansion of social dance in Ibiza and, from there, to multiple venues around the world. In fact, the international collective that designed Maddox continued its activities in Italy. In 1969, after Crocetta broke up his business partnership with Giancarlo Bornigia at the Piper Club in Rome, he decided to open a new space. He commissioned Carmenati and Fiorese to design a nightclub in Viareggio under the name of Piper 2000. The spatial strategies which had already been tested out in Maddox were applied here: the exterior was that of a conventional

<sup>18</sup> Masses of dancers under the effect of lighting and sound technologies in the Maddox, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Piper 2000, Viareggio, 1969, designed by Vincenzo Carmenati and Cesare Fiorese.



25 → Emilio Ponti, "A Viareggio nasce il 'Futuro'", *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 24 July 1969, p. 32.

nightclub, yet the interior presented a futuristic technological machine for social dance and pleasure. An article in Turin's *Gazzetta del Popolo* described "kilometres of stroboscopic lights, [a] dance floor of magnetic aluminium, an amphitheatre, or lunar crater, and a very high-fidelity stereo system manoeuvred by a taciturn Nordic operator with a degree".<sup>25</sup> Again, traditional architectural elements were dissolved in favour of an organic anti-form interior where advanced technologies played a central role <sup>19</sup>.

Although Piper 2000 in Viareggio did not last long, it represented another step in the unstoppable expansion of these new spatial typologies. In the following decades the emergence of specific genres of music that benefitted from being played in these types of spaces, and the emergence of social movements connected with hi-tech social dance, achieved mainstream acceptance and popularity. Their emancipatory effect was replicated and re-contextualised; different kinds of music responded to different historical moments and geographical areas, including disco and house-music clubs as instruments of self-recognition for the Afro-American gay communities in Chicago, or techno raves as spaces of empowerment for unemployed youth in the north of England during the Thatcher years. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the craze reached a peak, when millions of youth would participate in this phenomenological machinery every weekend. This cultural movement was to be called dance culture and it would happen in what we have seen was a *total space*: a public space where spatial technologies addressed all the senses to infuse synesthetic joy.

