

Rosemary Lee

Interiority/Exteriority and Techno Clubs

Taking Vilém Flusser's thoughts on music to somewhere he may not have wanted them to go, the techno club, this is an assessment of aspects of interior- and exteriority therein. At times at odds and at others in sync with Flusser's expressed ideals of musici, techno clubs have their own way of embodying festivity and rhythmicity. The architecture of the techno club, in terms of its physical construction, as well as the structures it produces, makes it a heterotopic space. It is an edifice set outside of everyday lived experience. Yet, it is this very exteriority to regular life, which secures its inclusion in and importance to it. It is this aspect, which allows the club to be a site, which not only houses but also governs the flows of sensation and bodily movement.

The techno club often exists as a place haunting another place. Repurposing commercial or industrial buildings, former offices, a vault, or power plant, like hermit crabs, they can take on the properties of a new place, camouflaged within the urban scenery. Quite often a "non-place" from the exterior: derelict and grey, with occasional graffiti-scrrawl, it is somewhere and nowhere at once. Simultaneously open to anyone, but only the chosen few, the process of selection itself serves a ritualistic function. It designates a margin of inclusivity from exclusivity, and marks the passage of transition from one place and state of being, to another. Placing a buffer between interiority and exteriority, there is a similar placelessness in the progression from queue, cloakroom, dance floor... "A club with a corridor: on entry you don't hear the slightest sound."ⁱⁱ

The ebb and flow of bodies into and out of the space at intervals marks its own time signature: filing in in orderly queue, and scattering out into the night or day-after. The timelessness in between, aided in most cases by being obscured from the conventional heliocentric schedule, is instead subject to a constructed set of circumstances: light, sound, space, chemicals... to structure perception. The hypnotic sensations hit the perceptual apparatus in such a way as to become transporting. The techno club does not synchronize itself with circadian time; it veritably ignores the change of seasons and the cadence observed by plants and animals. It sets an alternate pace, forgetting the nature external to it, and instead zeroing in on internal pulsations. The music provides a construction of sounds with which to sync up. It is our heart that beats the cadence of this rhythm.ⁱⁱⁱ Appealing to the body's own pulsations, electronic beats and tones in this case have more to do with the internal workings of

the body: echoing the natural pulse of the circulatory system and seducing the limbs to externalize their own tempo.

The kind of festivity embodied in techno clubs bears with it a Dionysianiv element. Though the temporality of the festival marks certain societal and seasonal shifts, it functions based on being “other” than regular time, outside the everyday. Likewise, the techno club serves its own societal and rhythmic functions. Much like the rhythm of festivals, a way of structuring the temporality of life, the placelessness of the club leaves one at a distance from which to return to reality, the dancer returns to the world changed, buzzing with a different vibration from before.

ⁱ Views expressed by Vilém Flusser in Lecture 15: On Music and Lecture 16: On Modern Music in his series of lectures, *The Influence of Existential Thought Today*, delivered at the Brazilian Institute of Philosophy, São Paulo, 1965.

ⁱⁱ Eberle, Martin, and Heinrich Dubel. *Temporary Spaces*. Berlin: Die Gestalten, 2001. 100.

ⁱⁱⁱ Flusser, Vilém. "Lecture 15: On Music." *The Influence of Existential Thought Today*. Brazilian Institute of Philosophy, São Paulo. 1965. 1.

^{iv} Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Raymond Geuss, and Ronald Speirs. "The Dionysiac World View." *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1999. 119-38.