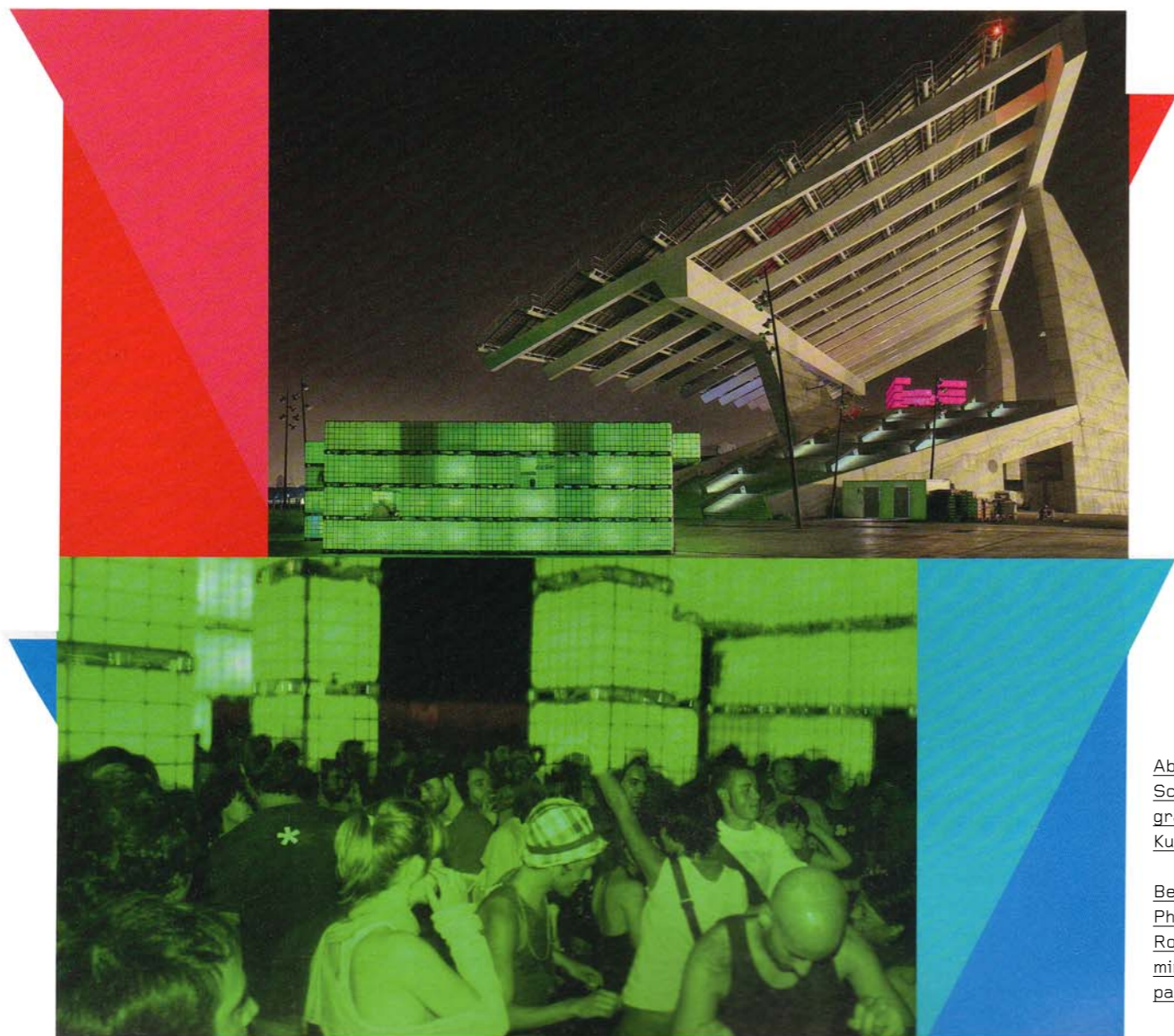




FUTURE CLUB

LEGOLAND FOR CLUBBERS

THE KUBIK LIGHTS UP EMPTY SPACES



Above: Frank Schoepgens photographed the Kubik in Barcelona.

Below: Photographer Robin Thomas mingled with the party crowd.

Every city has its "gaps": empty, deserted landscape strips. Mascha Thomas and Silvana de Hillerin hit on the novel idea of creating temporary structures to reanimate these gaps in the city – and so they came up with "Kubik", an urban club format inside an art installation that hit Berlin, Barcelona and Lisbon.

✍️ Lara Duke (Boqoo) 📷 Frank Schöppgens, Robin Thomas

While a fascination with the futuristic is nothing new, these days the future no longer carries a distant and unimaginable date. The current trend in art, design and popular culture is to create this same visionary feeling in the here and now with the futuristic blending effortlessly into the newest contemporary. The club Kubik is a case in point: an urban club format inside an art installation that sprung up in Berlin in July 2006, creating a temporary and purpose-built space for architecture to mingle freely with minimal techno and innovative lighting designs. Since its Berlin debut, Kubik has graced the summer club scene in Barcelona and Lisbon, with an additional appearance at Creamfields Lisboa in May 2007. On the strength of little more than mouth-to-mouth promo and a stack of coloured blocks serving as flyers, the more curious of clubbers made the discovery and passed on the word through images sent via mobiles. Their photos showed an open air space created by a careful assembly of large illuminated cubes arranged in L shapes to provide an entrance, exit, DJ booth, bar and various openings to the outside; an interactive space that could be enjoyed from all angles and took on form with the arrival of the clientele.

Hour of Birth

The original idea for the club came about through a meeting between Berlin-based organisers Mascha Thomas and Silvana de Hillerin, both in their late 20s, and architects Modulo Beat who had begun to experiment with the idea of stacking empty liquid containers to create 3D structures, equally attractive inside and out. From here, Mascha and Silvana, with a complementary background in organising events and cultural exhibitions, hit on the novel idea of creating temporary structures to "reanimate the gaps" in the city, brightening the empty and abandoned spaces with a little summer love. As Mascha explains, "We were looking to create a place where we would love to go, a place to dance, celebrate, meet people and enjoy something artistic."

Growing Up

Kubik Berlin enjoyed a riverside setting and was built using 144 liquid tanks, each measuring a little over 1 sqm and weighing around 60 kg. The tanks, made of white plastic and metal, are sturdy and resistant and offer a fully flexible format for experimenting with shape, form and size. The initial layout was developed along with the architects, and a

lighting engineer worked to illuminate the cubes with green and a touch of red lighting. Friends were also recruited to help set up, get the word out and run the show. With a crew of around 20, Mascha describes the opening night as being an improvised and challenging affair, with plenty of quick, on-your-feet thinking to keep things moving. Some 800 clubbers enjoyed a great night out and many returned for more during Kubik's summer residency in the German capital.

Open air

The one downside was the weather. The structure is completely uncovered and therefore vulnerable to rainy nights. This, however, presented fewer problems with the arrival of Kubik in Lisbon and Barcelona the following year, where two sites were set up in parallel, this time by the sea. In Barcelona, the crew had initial difficulties finding a suitable spot due to noise levels and the plethora of outside summer events in the city. They finally settled on the Fòrum and ordered up 279 cubes to create a two-room structure, their largest to date, this time green and pink in colour. It hit the spot with a mixed crowd with a fondness for art, culture, fashion and electronic music. The minimalist theme of the structure and lighting design was also present in the music: Minimal Electro with an occasional smattering of Drum'n'Bass, mostly at the hands of local DJs. Invitations were sent out to clubs and labels and a booker, Marc Klimaschewsky from Makiro Entertainment, was brought in to hunt out the best in Minimal Electro. Space was also made for up-and-coming talents on certain nights of the week. Names that have appeared at Kubik to date include Funk d'Void, Filo, Marc Twain, Superpitcher and Tobias Schmidt, and it is likely many more will be added to the list as we look to the future.

Bright Future

The format is simple and effective and Kubik could quite easily go on lighting up empty spaces in any number of locations. Unsurprisingly, it has sparked lively interest from a variety of fields, with requests even to host corporate events. Mascha, however, remains firm on this point: "We are not McDonald's; we are more open to other concepts now, but not too open..." Big name sponsorship and association may be all the rage, but Kubik is far more concerned with building a much more personal and interactive version of the future in which we live. ★