

Anthony Bond

Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani
Phantom clubs Berlin/Liverpool

Nina Fischer and Maroan el Sani have been photographing the entrances to temporary nightclubs in Berlin. Because they are illegal, these venues are often only occupied for one night, and the signs of the event are ephemeral graffiti and posters. The artists were invited to seek out and document similar events in Liverpool, a city famous for its club life. As it turned out, Liverpool did have such clubs 10 or 15 years ago, but these have now become established venues. The artists decided not to show the entrances of these more established spaces, but instead to find obscure sites where a club could have been (or might one day be). They brought with them posters made from their Berlin photographs, which they put up near the entrances of these phantom sites. They then re-photographed the posters in situ. The resulting photographs will be run off as a poster series and pasted around Liverpool, suggesting potential or fictitious club sites.

Back in the gallery space the Berlin club photographs and the phantom images will be hung together. Fischer and El Sani have made interesting comparisons between Berlin and Liverpool. Whereas Berlin has been attracting thousands of young people since the early '90s, Liverpool has been partially emptied since the decline of its shipping industry. Like the Mitte of Berlin when the wall first came down, there are whole areas of empty buildings that lend themselves to informal occupation. In Berlin this happened spontaneously. First came the squatters, many of whom were artists. The authorities accepted and even encouraged their activities just to get life back into the streets.

It was in this climate that the clubs and bars flourished. „Liverpool is hoping for new inhabitants they point out. „There are already a lot of young people, coming into town. Maybe the time will soon come when they need the space. Then the houses in the abandoned streets can be used again. We have already had a look around the streets, and there are places we would like to turn into bars or clubs.“

Anthony Bond, Curator of the 1st Liverpool Biennial, 1999
Trace, Catalogue, The Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art in Association with the Tate Gallery,
ISBN: 0 9536761 0 2