

L'EXPO DU SPECTACLE

I'M COMING OUT

TOURING EXHIBITION
PRESENTATION



PHILHARMONIE
DE PARIS
MUSÉE DE LA MUSIQUE

PRESENTATION

GENERAL CONCEPT

Born in the United States in the early 1970s, disco music quickly became a **global phenomenon**. Against the grain of stereotypes, this exhibition does justice to the rapid rise of this music, deeply rooted in the history and culture of Black America, inheriting from soul, gospel, and funk. A **collection of artworks, audiovisual archives, photographs, instruments, and costumes highlights the political and festive dimension of this music**, which brought together various minorities and social classes on the dancefloor, all united in a hedonistic surge. Accompanied by an **exclusive soundtrack mixed by the renown DJ Dimitri from Paris**, the exhibition emphasizes the **aesthetics that disco inspired among artists and designers**.

Michael Abramson, UNTITLED#047, CA, 1974 – 1977. © Michael L.Abramson



KEY TOURING INFORMATION

- **Presentation in Paris:**
From February 14th to August 17th, 2025
- **Touring Availability:** from October 2025
- **Surface:** 750 - 1000 sqm (adjustable)
- Over 220 physical pieces
 - original artworks, objects, and costumes
 - archives, photographs and reproductions
 - + a selection of audiovisual & digital pieces
- **Publication:** Catalogue published with Editions de la Martinière, 240 pp. Full color
Translation and re-edition can be discussed

TEAM

Curator

Jean-Yves Leloup

Journalist, lecturer, curator, artist and DJ, Jean-Yves Leloup is one of the great specialist of dance and electronic music. He has curated the exhibition “Electro” that has toured in Paris, London, Venice, Düsseldorf and Den Bosch.

Scientific Advisor

Patrick Thévenin

Specialist of dance music history, clubbing cultures and LGBT+ movements, Patrick Thévenin is a journalist, editor and lecturer. He has worked for medias such as Trax, Les Inrockuptibles and Tétu.

Associate Curator & Project Manager

Marion Challier

Scenographers

Stéphane Villard (Studio GGSV)

Laure Dezeuze (Studio Bloomer)

Graphic Designer

Agnès Dahan Studio

KEY CONCEPTS

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

At the heart of the exhibition, an **exclusive 1h30min mix by the Dimitri from Paris** sets the perfect rhythm, immersing visitors in the pulsating beats and grooves of disco.

A VISUAL EXPERIENCE

The exhibition is also an invitation to step into the electrifying world of Disco, where music comes to life in a **dazzling visual spectacle**. It allows an immersion in the cultural history of Disco, from its roots in the early 1970s in New York City to its most legendary clubs. Supported by an **immersive experience** that capture the essence of this vibrant era, visitors are invited to explore the spirit of the 1970s and celebrate the exuberance of Disco.



View from the exhibition
(c) Joachim Bertrand



View from the exhibition
(c) Joachim Bertrand

A CULTURAL HISTORY

Disco transcends the realm of music, weaving itself into the fabric of cultural, artistic, political, and technical upheavals of its time. This exhibition delves beyond clichés, showcasing **exclusive archives, photographs, and curated content that highlight disco's profound connection to social struggles**, the representation of marginalized communities in 1970s America, and its impact on popular culture.

AN ART EXHIBITION

Disco's distinctive aesthetics and rich cultural history have always engaged in a dialogue with the visual arts. This dynamic relationship comes to life in the exhibition, showcasing works by artists such as **Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Richard Bernstein, Pierre et Gilles and Faith Ringgold** as well as photographers such as **Peter Hujar, Meryl Meiser, Antonio Lopez, Tom Bianchi**. These pieces highlight the mutual influences between disco aesthetics and major artistic movements, underscoring how each has shaped and inspired the other.

THE EXHIBITION CIRCUIT

THE EXHIBITION DESIGN PROJECT

Developed by Stéphane Villard (GGSV) and Laure Dezeuze the design of the exhibition unfolds around a central gallery, **reminiscent of a club**, celebrating the vibrant visual universe of Disco with references to iconic club architectures, design, lights and neons. This design provides visitors with a sense of freedom while structuring the exhibition's circuit through dedicated spaces. Immersed in a visual and musical experience, visitors are invited on a journey starting with the origins of disco and ending with the genre's legacy in contemporary pop culture.



THE EXHIBITION CIRCUIT

Introduction - Disco Ball (Ether).

A spectacular installation by artist Jeanne Susplugas

Section 1 – Let's Groove.

Musical roots and expressions

Section 2 – I am what I am.

From struggle to party.

Section 3 - Night Fever

On the dancefloor

Section 4 – Celebration

The globalization of Disco



Jeanne Susplugas, Disco Ball (Ether), 2019, polystyrene & mirror
Exhibitionview (c) Joachim Bertrand

SECTION 1 – LET'S GROOVE

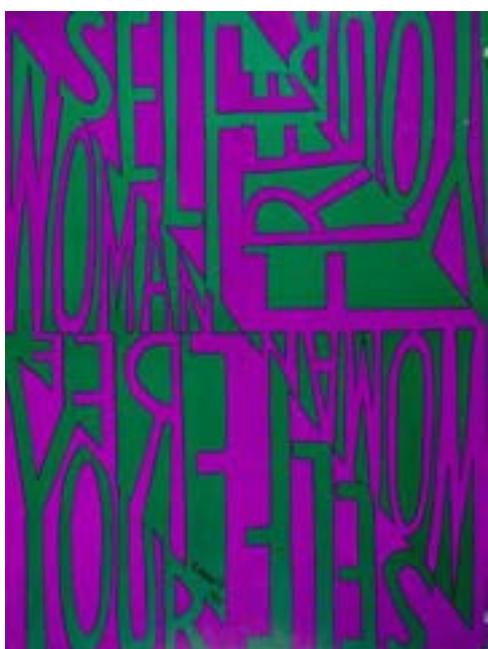
This section charts **the origins of Disco in the early 1970s**. Disco emerged echoing movements such as Black Pride and Black is Beautiful, boosting African-American culture, particularly its music, into increasing popularity in American society. Labels such as Philadelphia International Records and Motown infused soul music with new energy and sophistication, blending funk, gospel, and African percussion. This music was first popularized by young DJs in gay clubs helping disco gain unexpected success.

Let's Start the Dance

The form and inspiration primarily stem from the **rich history of African-American music**: soul, rhythm & blues, funk, jazz, and gospel. Echoing themes of identity and pride, disco allowed these musicians and performers to reach a broad international audience.

Hot Stuff

Disco was predominantly a **producer-driven music genre**. Figures like **Nile Rodgers** and **Giorgio Moroder**, worked behind the scenes in studios. Artists from soul and funk backgrounds, including George McCrae and The Jackson 5, also played pivotal roles in its evolution.



Faith Ringgold, Woman Free Yourself, 1971, ACA Galleries



Love is the message

The early disco scene saw innovative DJs and **pioneering clubs in New York**, where the genre emerged as a fusion of soul, funk, and African percussion. Venues like David Mancuso's The Loft and Nicky Siano's The Gallery became iconic, rivaling the influence of radio stations.

I'm every woman

Disco's vocals were dominated by "**disco divas**", African-American women whose powerful voices, shaped by jazz, gospel, and soul, celebrated femininity, empowerment, and sexuality. Icons such as **Donna Summer, Diana Ross, and Gloria Gaynor**, defined this era with their resilient performances and messages of pleasure and resilience.

EXHIBITION VIEWS



(c) Joachim Bertrand



(c) Joachim Bertrand

SECTION 2 – I AM WHAT I AM

The second section of the exhibition explores Disco's **political and activist context** amid the civil rights, gay rights, and feminist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Disco clubs provided a significant sanctuary for women, ethnic minorities, and homosexuals, offering a space of relative freedom from discriminations.

I'm coming out

In New York and across the United States during the 1960s, laws prohibited same-sex dancing, and gay individuals faced harassment by law enforcement, especially in their gathering places. The Stonewall Inn raid in 1969 sparked violent protests, marking a **symbolic step for the LGBT+ culture**, fostering militant groups, and prompting less repressive legislations for bars and clubs.

It's raining men

The cultural aftermath of Stonewall led to the development of safe spaces and a new **hedonistic approach to identity and sexuality** in cities like New York and San Francisco. Locations such as Fire Island became symbolic havens for the community, while venues like Flamingo, Tenth Floor, Paradise Garage, and The Saint in New York hosted pioneering disco parties from the late 1970s into the 1980s.



Bill Bernstein, Paradise Garage: dancefloor, 1979



Chris Callis, Divine

I am a big freak

Among disco and high-energy personalities, icons like Sylvester, Grace Jones, and Divine **challenged gender norms** and anticipated modern drag and queer culture by decades. These unconventional figures inspired a generation of artists, depicted in works by Andy Warhol, Peter Hujar, and Antonio Lopez, capturing the vibrancy and activism of the era.

EXHIBITION VIEWS



(c) Joachim Bertrand



(c) Joachim Bertrand

SECTION 3 – NIGHT FEVER

This section of the exhibition explores the rise of Disco in mainstream cultures and the **pivotal role of clubs** in this process. "Saturday Night Fever," released by late 1977, catapulted nightclub outings into a symbol of leisure across all societal levels, from the elite to working class. Nightclubs evolved into realms of fantasy, with DJs playing a central role amid technological innovation that immersed crowds in music.



Studio 54 archive/Bronley+Caldar Architects

Get Down Saturday Night

Following the massive success of "Saturday Night Fever", a wave of nearly **20,000 nightclubs emerged** across the US and Europe. Studio 54, launched in spring 1977 by Steve Rubell in a former Broadway opera house, became emblematic of this era.

Shake your body

Disco music elevated dance to an expressive art form, it popularized intricate **dance moves such as the "bump", "bus stop",** and the widespread **"hustle"**, originally a Latin couple dance. Mainstream exposure to dance expanded through shows like "Soul Train", which spotlighted African-American culture. Concurrently, within the queer community, dances like "voguing" and "waacking" emerged, reflecting desires for liberation and communal expression.

Music & lights

Technological advancements in sound and lighting during the 1970s transformed nightclub experiences. Engineers like Richard Long and Alex Rosner introduced powerful sound systems to New York clubs, while Italian companies like Coemar, Amplilux, and Claypaky **pioneered dynamic, multicolored lighting and projection systems**. Iconic clubs such as Studio 54, The Rink, and Xenon integrated



Studio 54 DJ booth, Hasse Person

advanced technology and elaborate decor, enhancing the dance environment with spectacular neon displays. Internationally, venues like Baia degli Angeli in Rimini and Le Palace in Paris set new standards with innovative features like laser projections.

EXHIBITION VIEWS



(c) Joachim Bertrand



(c) Joachim Bertrand

SECTION 4 – CELEBRATION

The final section of the exhibition explores the **globalization** of the phenomenon, the decline of popularity of the genre and the posterity of Disco. At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, as the movement peaked worldwide, its popularity waned in the United States. Disco persisted within the LGBT+ community and continued to inspire new artists, attesting to its enduring influence.

Good times

The disco boom of the late 1980s was amplified by numerous hits from popstars who embraced and appropriated the genre's codes. **Disco infiltrated all aspects of pop culture.** In fashion, new designers passionate about this culture made their mark in a field previously dominated by French creators.

Hernan Bas, Disco Demolition Night, 2002, MFA Houston



Never can say goodbye

In the 1980s, the disco phenomenon continued in Europe, spurring the creation of many nightclubs and embedding itself deeply in popular culture. The music evolved and spread to new countries across the globe. Over the past decades, disco has made **numerous comebacks**, its influence is evident in the work of pop and electro stars like **Madonna, Daft Punk, and Dua Lipa**.

I will survive

By 1979, in the United States, the phenomenon's overexploitation led to public fatigue. Considered superficial and subjected to homophobic and racist prejudices, **disco faced backlash**. This crisis was exacerbated by the conservative movement's rise and the AIDS epidemic. Nonetheless, the genre endured through the **High Energy sub-genre**, cherished by the gay community as a symbol of resilience against the epidemic.

EXHIBITION VIEWS



(c) Joachim Bertrand



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TOURING FEE

Hiring fee: *To be discussed*

Availability: From October 2025

The fee of the Philharmonie de Paris includes the following:

- Original concept and content development – designed for a 750sqm – 1000sqm modular space.
Adaptation to different spatial configurations can be discussed.
- Resale rights (contractual management and payment): for the exhibition curators, scenographers and graphic designers.
- Renegotiation (contractual management and payment of rights) of all the audiovisual / photos rights and artworks loans carried out by the Philharmonie de Paris.*
- Sound and audiovisual supervision by the Philharmonie team, during the production period and then on site when the exhibition is being set up.**
- Supervision of on-site installation and dismantling by the Philharmonie de Paris team, including condition reports on the artworks.**
- The exhibition kit : Artworks, material and packing list, technical files and requirements, graphic design guidelines, set design floorplans and a promotion kit (5 images free of rights for press and communication).

* This does not include music rights, which have to be dealt by the Venue according to local laws.

** This does not include travel and accommodation expenses of the technical and representative team (travel, hotel and per diem) – to be paid in addition to the fee.



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