Landesmuseum Zürich.

TE*CH*NO

Techno culture began making its mark on Swiss music in the 1990s, while also influencing fashion, graphic art and dance. As an expression of social change it sought to establish safe spaces for freedom and expression, and it changed the urban environment. The TE*CH*NO exhibition at the National Museum Zurich shines a spotlight on this movement in all its guises.

Techno originated in Detroit in the 1980s. Inspired by science fiction and driven by the beats of electronic drum machines and synthesisers, Afro-American musicians like Juan Atkins developed a new sound with a strong emphasis on rhythm. Techno quickly grew in popularity in Switzerland after making its way there via the United Kingdom and Germany. Clubs, disused industrial buildings and even the great outdoors became new venues in which to enjoy the communal dance experience.

Zurich's first Street Parade in 1992, inspired by the Love Parade in Berlin, marked a milestone for the Swiss techno scene. It is now the world's largest techno party and has helped establish techno culture as one of Switzerland's living traditions.

Techno thrives on the interplay between various creative disciplines. Techniques such as sampling and collage not only permeate the music, they also feature in graphic design and fashion. Swiss designers' innovative typographies have helped shape the scene's visual identity. The fashion world has seen a blurring of the boundaries between subculture and high fashion, with elements of techno culture showing up on international catwalks. And techno has also set new standards in relation to tolerance and diversity: the scene was, and is, a space for celebrating freedom, community and cultural experimentation.

But the movement has also run into barriers along the way. Restrictive venue licensing laws were put in place to reduce night-time noise and prevent alcohol abuse. Up to the mid-1990s, these made it difficult to organise dance parties and open new clubs. The scene reacted by holding unlicensed raves at impromptu locations or by illegally occupying spaces. The rapid growth of the movement and the sense of euphoria it induced brought further dubious aspects to the fore. The music was often considered a disturbance, leading to complaints about noise. Loss of control and ecstasy were a staple part of the techno nightlife scene, causing

problems with drug consumption. Innovative prevention services such as drug-checking have evolved in response to this challenge.

The exhibition has been curated with the involvement of protagonists from throughout Switzerland. It provides a comprehensive insight into this multi-faceted scene, its influences on cultural and social policy, and its blossoming as a youth movement. In a setting designed to look like a record shop, video and audio installations featuring the personal stories of people who were there at the time take visitors on a journey through the history of techno culture and how it transformed society. Along with items being exhibited in a museum context for the first time, they make the story appealing even to people who have never had anything to do with techno.

As well as guided tours for schools, the exhibition has an extensive programme of accompanying events that includes encounters both inside and outside the museum, talks, discussions and focus sessions plus a three-day dance event in the museum courtyard.

For more information please contact:
Alexander Rechsteiner | Communication | National Museum Zurich.
T. +41 44 218 65 64 | Email: medien@nationalmuseum.ch