



CULT FILM DIRECTOR **DAVID LYNCH** TALKS TO *CHRISTOPHER KANAL* ABOUT HIS FIRST INTERIORS PROJECT, A NIGHTCLUB IN PARIS BASED ON HIS MOVIE MULHOLLAND DRIVE

OUT AND DOWN IN PARIS

David Lynch's 'salon of the surreal' features a retro bar that is evocative of one of his favourite paintings, Nighthawks by Edward Hopper

ALEXANDRE GUIRKINGER

Filmmaker and artist David Lynch has applied his idiosyncratic vision to designing a Paris nightclub, a departure from filmmaking that's not as far-fetched as it first appears. *Silencio* in Paris, which opened in September, is inspired by the identically named Club Silencio, which is a key location in his critically acclaimed film noir from 2001, *Mulholland Drive*.

This latest off-kilter experiment from the American auteur follows his exploration into music last year when Lynch released his first vocal single, *Good Day Today*, through British independent label Sunday Best Recordings. His first vocal single? Lynch has been making music for years through his collaboration with the composer Angelo Badalamenti, most memorably for the series *Twin Peaks*. But designing a nightclub is a complete departure for the 65-year old.

Six flights of stairs beneath the rue de Montmartre in the 2e arrondissement, *Silencio* is Lynch's salon of the surreal and



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weird. The club was conceived by Arnaud Frisch, the charismatic entrepreneur behind the popular Parisian nightspot the Social Club and music label *Savoir Faire*, as a 21st-century burrow for artists to mingle and exchange ideas, where things happen. Think Andy Warhol's *Factory* in Sixties NYC or the Dadaists' *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich in 1916. But there is a distinctly 21st-century addenda – *Silencio* is a private members club, with membership starting at €420 a year.

Lynch isn't the first artist to have ventured beneath 142 rue de Montmartre. Indeed, the playwright Molière is still thought to be here, albeit buried somewhere in the cellar. Emile Zola printed *J'Accuse* in a press in the basement, while the great socialist Jean Jaurès was assassinated in the cafe just across the road trying to stop the Second World War.

2011 and it is Lynch's turn to stir up the 2e. 'There are zillions of ideas out there,' Lynch explains in his unmistakable



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drawl from his studio in LA. 'They are fuel for the artist. You catch some which you fall in love with, and like a very strong dog they will lead you here and there.'

Even by Lynch's standards Mulholland Drive is enigmatic to the point of utter abstraction. The film follows the increasingly nightmarish adventures of a naïve, would-be Hollywood actress Betty (Naomi Watts) and Rita (Laura Harring), an amnesiac on the run from the Mob. Their neo-noir trip through Hollywood's dark underbelly leads them eventually to Club Silencio. Ironically, the film's meaning, or lack of, is best summed up by the words of the sinister performer on the stage of Club Silencio: 'It is an illusion.'

Silencio in Paris is very much real and immersed in Lynchian motifs. 'The space for the club existed underground so the design had to fit the space,' says Lynch. 'The ideas, you could say, were similar to cinema ideas in the way sets are designed to create a specific mood.' The director

Left: Film director and now nightclub designer David Lynch

Below: Arnaud Frisch, owner of Paris' The Social Club and record label Savior Faire, conceived the idea for Silencio, a private club

Below left: The Wire chair, designed by David Lynch for Silencio

Bottom: Inside the subterranean Silencio, the art library



designed everything in the 195 sq m club from the toilets – suitably crafted in pitch black – to the Fifties retro bar furniture that evokes one of Lynch's favourite paintings, Edward Hopper's Nighthawks. 'Hopper can catch a dream in these images,' Lynch says. 'He makes me dream. I think there is a film in every painting.'

The club is a series of intimate, individually tailored spaces, dedicated to arousing a different atmosphere. 'As far as I'm concerned this club is not linked really to anything,' he thinks. 'It's meant to be a standalone, unique club with its own mood and experience.' Despite this, Lynch's visual style and cinematic flair are unmistakable through the composition of interiors using furniture, lighting and art.

Lynch collaborated with designer Raphael Navot, architecture agency Enia and lighting designer Thierry Dreyfus to realise his vision. The club contains a concert stage, restaurant, art library and 24-seat private cinema.

Lynch says that Silencio was designed for people to 'induce and sustain a specific state of alertness and openness to the unknown'. The club certainly stimulates, even confuses, the senses with its gold-leaf-gilded Buddhist mandalas on the sinuously curved walls, a dream forest-like smoking room, and the live performance stage with a reflective dance floor – both of which could have come straight from the sets of Twin Peaks or Blue Velvet. 'The ideas, you could say, were similar to cinema ideas in the way sets are designed to create a specific mood,' explains Lynch. 'Design and architecture and furniture are like that. You try to get the space to come alive in a certain way.'

And then there is the furniture – every stick of which has been designed by Lynch, who has in recent years produced various limited edition pieces from abstract pine espresso tables to tar-covered audio speakers. For Silencio Lynch created three designs: Black Birds is a series of »



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Above: The Fifties-style bar at Silencio, where characters from designer David Lynch's movie Mulholland Drive would feel at home

Above right: Lynch collaborated with designer Raphael Navot, architecture agency Enia and lighting designer Thierry Dreyfus. He designed all the spaces, including the wash rooms

asymmetric, faceted, black-leather seats and tables; Wire is a collection of welcoming seats and sofas, while the cinema has an ergonomic seat that enhances the cinematic experience. Lynch even designed the club's carpets. All furniture and materials were made-to-measure by firms including Domeau & Pérès and Ateliers Gohard. And his control over the project didn't stop there – Lynch even had a hand choosing the type of peanuts served at the bar.

Lynch's movie characters would probably feel at home propping up the bar at Silencio. 'It's sad to say goodbye to a world,' Lynch says. 'The thing that saves you is to fall in love with characters in a new world. But sometimes you drift off and think, what is going on with the characters in Twin Peaks?'

Paris has been good to Lynch for many years. In 2002 he was made a Chevalier of the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur. Five years later the Fondation Cartier in the city hosted the first major exhibition of his paintings and photographs.

It is now 20 years since Twin Peaks, Lynch's cult television series. Co-created with Mark Frost, Twin Peaks introduced audiences were introduced into his uniquely surreal world of dancing dwarves and the 'Log Lady'. 'Who killed Laura Palmer?' was on the lips of everyone.

Lynch's work inspires veneration as much as bafflement. These days though he seems to have forsaken the screen for a variety of pet projects spanning art,

photography, music, paintings and sculptures, not to mention a passion for transcendental meditation through the David Lynch Foundation. 'When you start something it ignites a flow of ideas,' he tells me. 'Action and reaction, it's so beautiful.' Lynch's last major movie feature was Inland Empire in 2006, which he made without a script. Now, after a 40-year film career, there are rumours of retirement from the industry.

Known for unique set designs ever since his first film Eraserhead in 1976, which took four years to complete, design has always fascinated Lynch, who trained as an artist at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Nightclubs in particular feature prominently in his films, from the Slow Club in Blue Velvet and the Roadhouse in Twin Peaks to Club Silencio in Mulholland Drive.

It is intriguing that a director known for his disturbing psychogenic films has now created an environment that his audience is meant to relax in. Even in Silencio, however, Lynch maintains the odd unsettling touch, such as the wooden speakers that resemble an angry face.

At the club's opening night Lynch was nowhere to be seen, but he does intend to head over to Paris very soon. 'I am really looking forward to experiencing it,' he says.

Lynch is buzzing with ideas and is currently putting together his own art, film and music programme for Silencio: 'At any moment I can get an idea. It's like "Boom!". It will strike you anywhere.' ■



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