

NELLE DISCOTEQUE | Katherine Armstrong

Artist statement



Linocut print, digital typography

Radio archive, March 10, 2020

<https://soundcloud.com/wnyu/nelle-discoteche-march-10-2020>

In December of 2019 I caught disco fever. I was specifically hypnotized and simultaneously disappointed by the subgenre Italo Disco, which remains a strong influence of contemporary house and techno. Marked by drum machines and cheap synths, Italo sprouted in Italy in retaliation for the tangible death of disco in the US after the 1979 Disco Demolition Night riots. The subgenre can be defined by its one-hit wonders and commercial success, yet its saga remains frustratingly unexamined and

forgotten by music historians. Artists fell back into anonymity just as quickly as they had come out of it.

I wanted to recover the experience of Italo and offer it back up to the public. Adopting the stage name Dj Ro and inviting on my knowledgeable cohost, Dj Thunder, I crafted *Nelle Discoteche*, an Italo radio show airing on WNYU 89.1 FM. For two hours every Tuesday night, from 7–9 p.m., listeners are transported back to the 80s, past the bouncer and right onto the dance floor of Altromondo Studios, full of vibrant life, neon, plastic, and polyester. An archival feat and an ode to the German pirate radios, dance club djs, and eventual compilation labels that helped to propagate the music worldwide, my cohost and I get to play the role of both artists and curators. Djing in B2B style, we spin and warp the rigidity of archival presentation standards and signal back towards the spontaneity and reactivity of the traditional live audience that Italo enjoyed. Together we excavate forgotten tracks and rely upon an online community of other aficionados to string together live weekly performances over local FM airwaves and globally on our site, wnyu.org.

While the show's motivation had always been nostalgic in nature and part of a larger effort to provide programming to the public that was both groovy and educational, something did change. *Nelle Discoteche* coincidentally saw its first airdate on February 18. That same week Italy's COVID-19 cases were reported to jump into the double digits. Because of this, it became especially important to continue on with this artistic mission, even when it meant changing the show's format to accommodate new remote broadcasting. The hope now stands that someone who needs it might come upon it and be carried away by a different kind of fever, taken elsewhere, to a place of joy found only in the most kitsch of disco.