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LA CITTÀ DELL' UOMO



Photo courtesy of Giuseppe Maldener



MOVIE-HOUSE TERRITORY

Movie theatres, once social meeting places par excellence, are now at risk of becoming defunct. The approach to their renovation or transformation projects must be informed by a thorough knowledge of their formal and typological consistency, something that the study we present here has set out to accomplish

Francesco Maggiore



Photo courtesy of Domingo Miliella

Cinema halls represent a vital asset in the cultural offering of any region. Being aware of this value is indispensable in planning their development and enhancement. This premise led to the need for a survey of movie theatres in Apulia, Italy so as to constitute a data bank of information concerning their present condition, in order to be able to programme their future. The survey, promoted by the Apulia Regional Council for the Mediterranean, in collaboration with A.A.M. Architettura Arte Moderna and the Bari Polytechnic, describes cinema space in urban, architectural and social terms. It also examines the role played by movie theatres in history, culture and the economy. The resulting book, titled *Territori del Cinema*, is divided into four parts. The first deals with cinema as a physical place, analysed in its historical, typological and cultural aspects. The second is a census of the 269

operating or disused cinemas in Apulia, accomplished by creating a catalogue of detailed profiles containing descriptions, photographic reports, project drawings, archive illustrations and pictures by famous photographers. The third offers reflections on and evaluations of the cinema system (management, legislation, statistics, and urban-planning aspects). The fourth contains authoritative accounts by a variety of figures connected with the cinema world (movie-theatre owners, movie directors, actors, critics, journalists and producers). The book's four sections are enriched by a lavish collection of photographs, and by original drawings by Vincenzo D'Alba. The latter are illustrations based on the architectural and cinematographic history of movie halls. With humour and analogies, the artwork creates an iconography of cinema theatres. The book analyses the multiple causes of the crisis that in

Opposite page, top: map of Apulia.
Bottom: cinema-teatro Candido di Soleto, Lecce.

This page, clockwise from top left: Cinema dei Fiori, Noha, Galatina; cinema-teatro Palazzo, Serracapriola (Foggia); cinema-teatro Royal, Bari; Cinema ABC, Bari; cinema Fulgor, Manfredonia (Foggia); Supercinema, Trani



Photo courtesy of Giuseppe Oliveri



Photo courtesy of Giuseppe Oliveri



Photo courtesy of Giovanni Chiaromonte



Photo courtesy of Gianni Zanni



Photo courtesy of Carlo Garzia



Photo courtesy of Gianni Leone



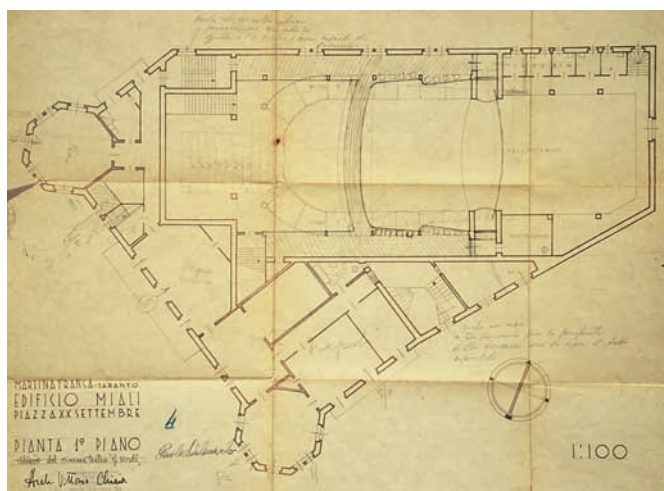
Photo courtesy of Giuseppe Oliveri



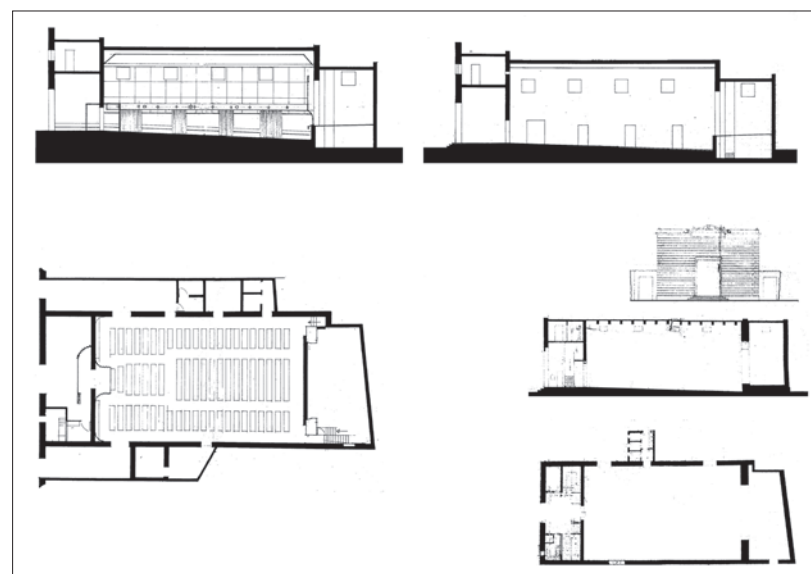
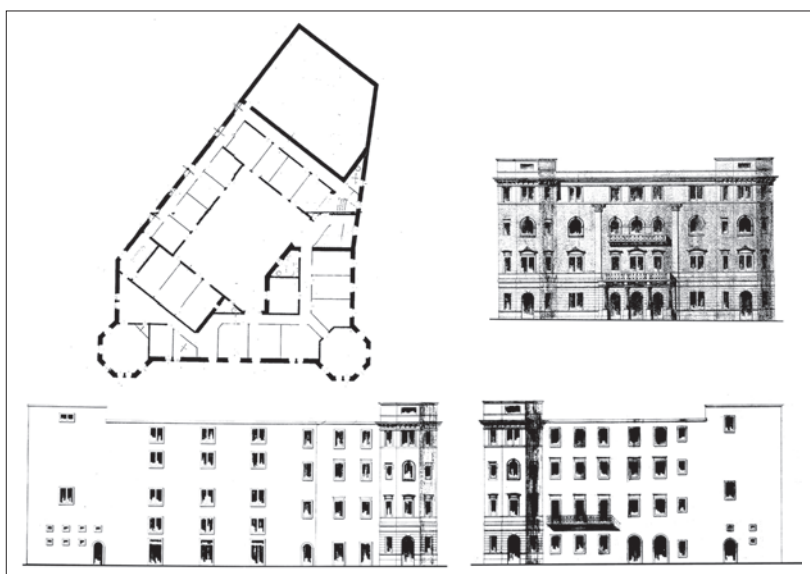
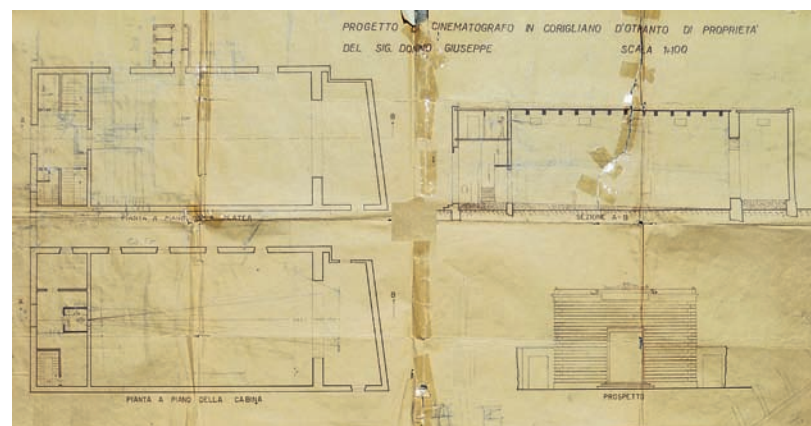
This study is published in a forthcoming book, the cover of which is seen above, right: Valentina Ieva, Francesco Maggiore, *Territori del cinema: stanze, luoghi, paesaggi. Un sistema per la Puglia. Letture e interpretazioni*, Editore Gangemi, Rome 2013. Scientific and cultural coordination: Francesco Moschini. Illustrations: Vincenzo D'Alba. Collaboration: Claudia Ceppi, Orlando

Lacarbonara, Davide Pace. Università degli Studi della Basilicata; LAB Laboratorio di Fotografia di Architettura e Paesaggio. Above: interior of the Cinema-Teatro Nibio di Mesagne (Brindisi). Built in 1964, the structure was conceived to have a 518-seat capacity in an auditorium with a large ovoid shape. This movie house closed in the mid-90s and now the building is derelict

Cineteatro Verdi, Martina Franca



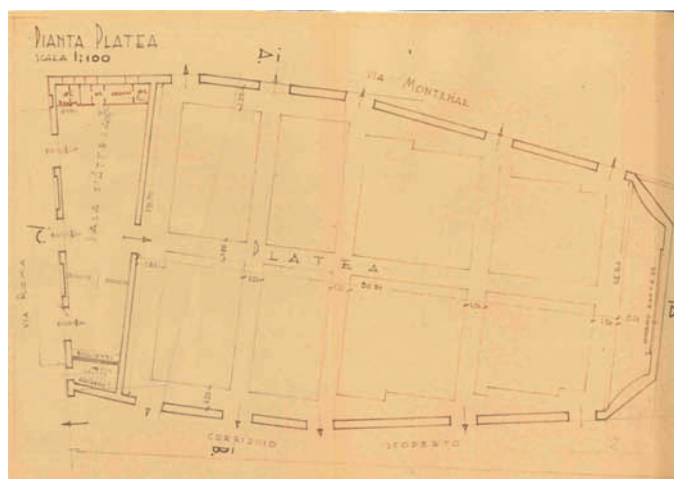
SuperCinema, Corigliano d'Otranto



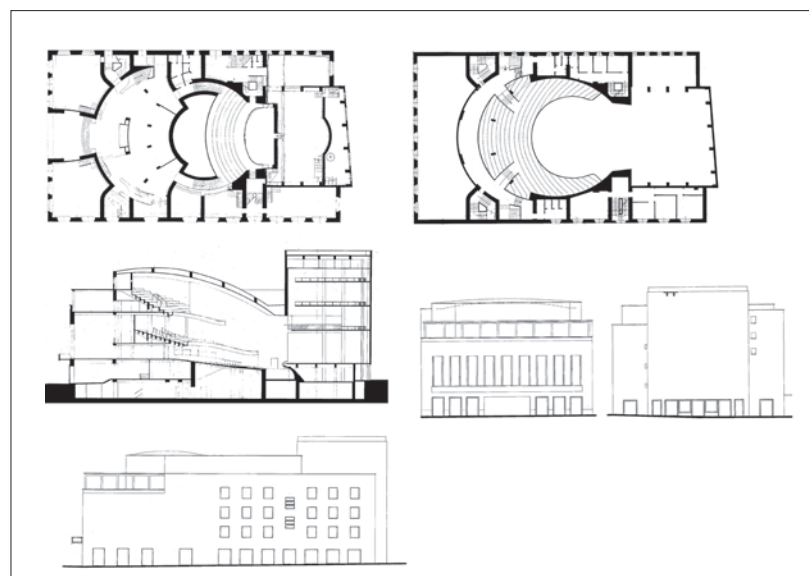
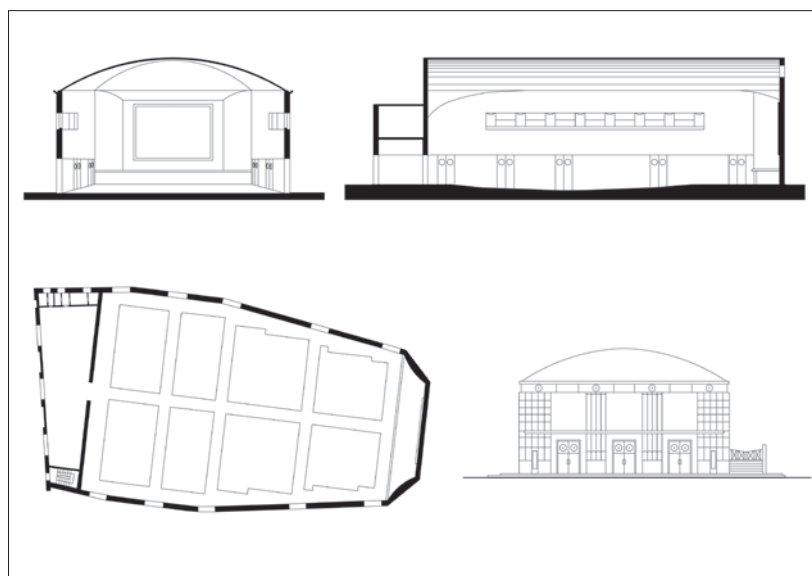
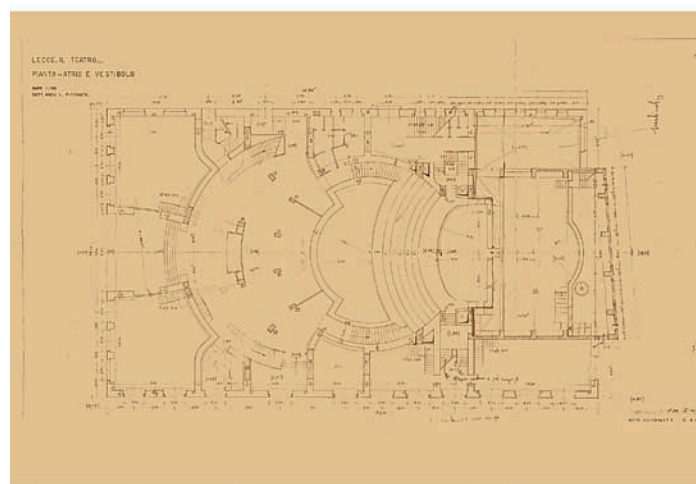
recent years has been particularly threatening to the survival of small cinemas. This phenomenon involves a complex urban and social system in need of focused measures that must be issued in the legislative spheres of the region, its provinces and municipalities. The task of territorial analysis and planning is outlined in a comprehensive technical scheme in relation to road networks, travel time, customer base and the attractions offered by individual towns. All this serves to assess the competitiveness of those areas best suited to welcome new enterprises while respecting existing ones. Indeed, the survey allows for the extrapolation of the settlement-dynamics of cinema buildings, creating the basis upon which to replan both the old and the new. It will be able to give thorough answers to future functional requirements. Initiated by the region's task force for the assessment of cinema

businesses, this work provides indispensable technical and cultural support both to safeguard Apulia's cinema heritage and guide its future development by using the information in the definition of criteria and parameters. The research conducted for *Territori del Cinema* will lead to a proposal for development, distances between establishments, and the cultural offer of cinema, theatre and entertainment venues. Historical and literary evaluations, sociological and statistical considerations, together with architectural and infrastructural proposals, will help to wisely define the renovation and redevelopment of Apulia's cinema network. Hopefully this survey will stimulate thought on a wider cultural operation, reaching out from Apulia to include neighbouring regions and eventually involve the whole country. ④

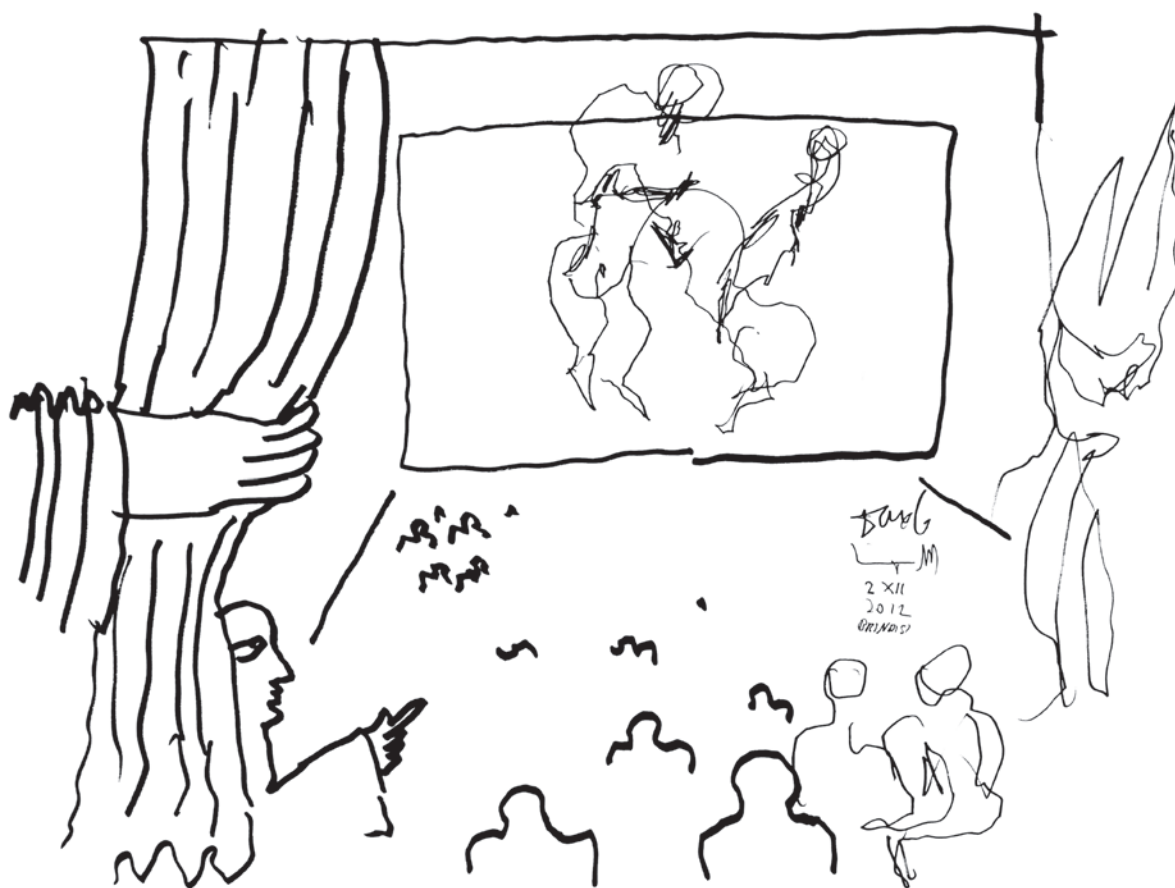
Cinema Coviello, Bitonto



Cinema-teatro Massimo, Lecce



RETOUR AU PASSÉ DI/BY DARIO FO



Courtesy Collezione Francesco Maschini e Gabriel Vaduva

Four-handed drawing by Dario Fo and Vincenzo D'Alba. Made in Brindisi on 2.12.2012 for the series "Duetti/Duelli: partite a scacchi sul disegno" promoted by Architettura Arte Moderna

Here we have the task of committing to memory something that has become the past. The danger is that this past may be final. Cinemas today are going through a bad patch, partly because certain (not all of them, fortunately) TV channels have chosen to air important films, conducting a sort of *retour au passé di*, revisiting the past of cinematography. This naturally weakens the importance and especially the meaning of going to the movie theatre. True, in the movie theatres of the city, everybody was a stranger to everybody else. You entered in the dark, you saw the film, you saw the silhouettes of people behind you and in front of you; but there was no contact between the spectators, unless the film happened to be a riotous comedy, in which case people were united by laughter. But today, in Milan or Rome, there isn't much point any more in going to see a film at the cinema. "Better on cassette" as they used to say, or on DVD, where you can watch more attentively and maybe replay certain scenes and study them, watch them, observe them.

It is important to go back and look at the past because it can bring, I won't say nostalgia, but something better than nostalgia: the awareness of a history that you need to retrieve

and know about, even if it is over, because not knowing it would be like saying there's no point in studying Greek theatre any more, or commedia dell'arte. Heaven forbid!

As for me, and like me a great many other actors, we gained our experience precisely from these two fundamental arts. And in fact the theatrical Academies that matter are precisely the ones that start from Greek theatre and move on through commedia dell'arte. These are the foundations containing all significant elements of theatricality, infused with a very important factor of collectivity. I made a fairly long and exacting study of the whole spectrum of comic, grotesque and satirical cinema, from Charlie Chaplin to Buster Keaton and including all the great theatrical operators. Not in the accepted sense of the word operator today, but meaning the people those who actually make theatre, who set up, invent things, find solutions.

And I even tried to make a film about that, *The Screwball* (1956), which contains all the fundamental and cultural elements of timing. I wasn't alone: in France, Germany and America everybody had gone back to study this particular form of cinema, from silents to talkies, movies whose rhythm and pace was linked to

musicality, or rather to music itself.

It was an extraordinary experience for me to see all those old movies. They belong to an almost metaphysical period of theatre and especially cinema. But the incredible thing is that most of those movies came from comedy circus theatre, which only goes to show that nothing ever springs from nothing; there is always something important and historical behind it, in a never-ending kind of way.

As regards the preservation of small cinema theatres in historic town centres, I think the situation changes according to the city you happen to be in – the cultural interests of that particular population and the cultural movements of its intellectuals, both those of acclaimed experience and the younger ones just starting out.

The basic answer is that these cinemas, especially the disused ones converted into warehouses and so on, should become the property of groups with a direct interest to study movies, groups that can prove they are worth their salt, and above all, that won't be running the place just to further their own interests, but to offer quality entertainment to the people as a fundamental element of memory, and also as the projection of a programme. @

Taken from the book *Territori del cinema: stanze, luoghi, paesaggi*