

A&B- APR 2007



*The pictures tells the story of the Ariana Cinema premises as it awaited the architects.*



*One of the cinema theatres in Kabul that was destroyed in the civil war years.*



*Night view of the rejuvenated cinema.*



# CARRY ON ARIANA!

*Photographs: Courtesy A&D, Jean Paul Lemdjedri*

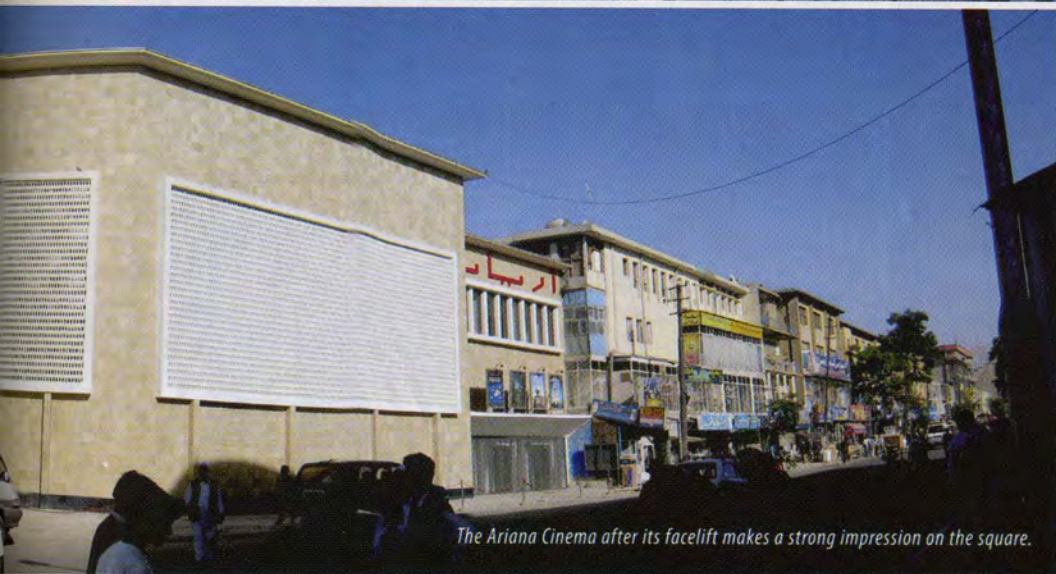




*Ariana Cinema as it dominates the urban centre.*



*The bright hallway under renovation.*



*The Ariana Cinema after its facelift makes a strong impression on the square.*



*The opening show for ladies and children.*

The reinstatement of Ariana Cinema in the recreational fabric of Kabul marked the re-emergence of a suffocated medium of social integration. On the architectural scene it was one of the first examples of adaptive reuse, setting the benchmark for many projects to come.





A remarkable recovery with landscape features.



The tea room for social interaction.

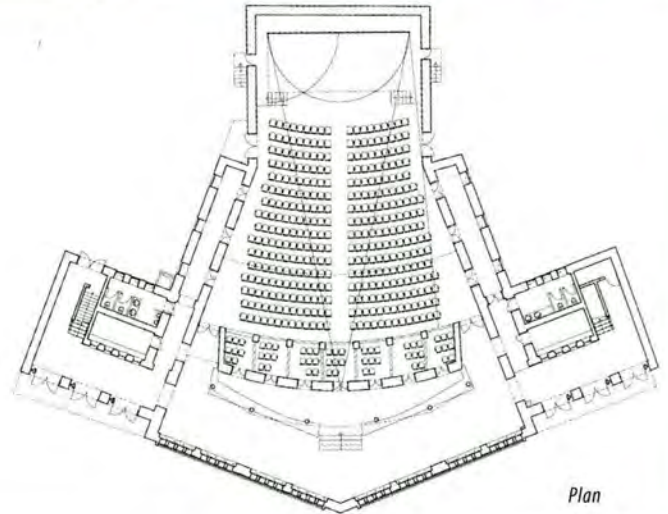


The screen facade makes a strong architectural statement.

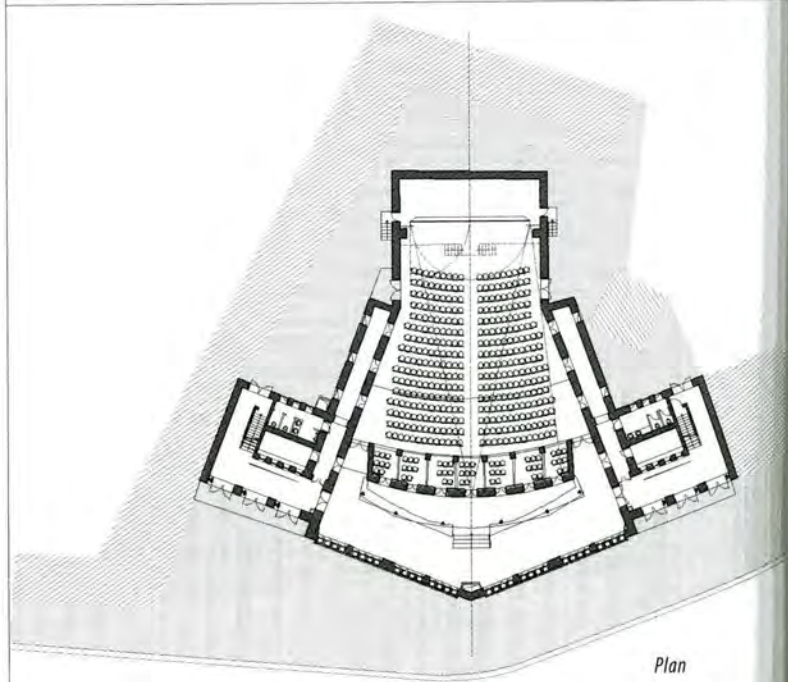
Many speak of “a face that launched a thousand ships!” but lost in translation are ideas that launch a thousand minds. An impulsive idea led a group of well-known French directors to head towards Afghanistan in 2002 to substantiate the freedom associated with their medium of expression into a built fabric. An idea that would allow minds to evolve in what was the confused and complex post-war scenario faced by the Afghan population. This initiative by Patrice Chéreau, Claude Lelouch, Jacques Perrin, Danis Tanovic and Danièle Thompson gave back to the capital city of Kabul its largest cinema and what was a hub of social interaction.

Sitting in one of the busy squares of the capital city, known as the Pashtounistan Square, the famous Cinema Ariana was built under the Soviet regime, before nearly 20 years of civil war and inoccupancy rendered it into a bullet-ridden ruin of debris. This was a benchmark reflection of most of the cinema halls in Kabul, which once thrived as the prime recreational activity. To interpret and integrate the proposed design, Architecture & Development (A&D-NGO of French origin) represented by Jean Paul Lemdjedri took the initiative to execute the design in partnership with the French firm Namur and Lalo, a practice that specialises in cinema design. The aim was to refurbish this symbol of cultural liberation and thus revitalise this much-loved art form of the Afghan capital.

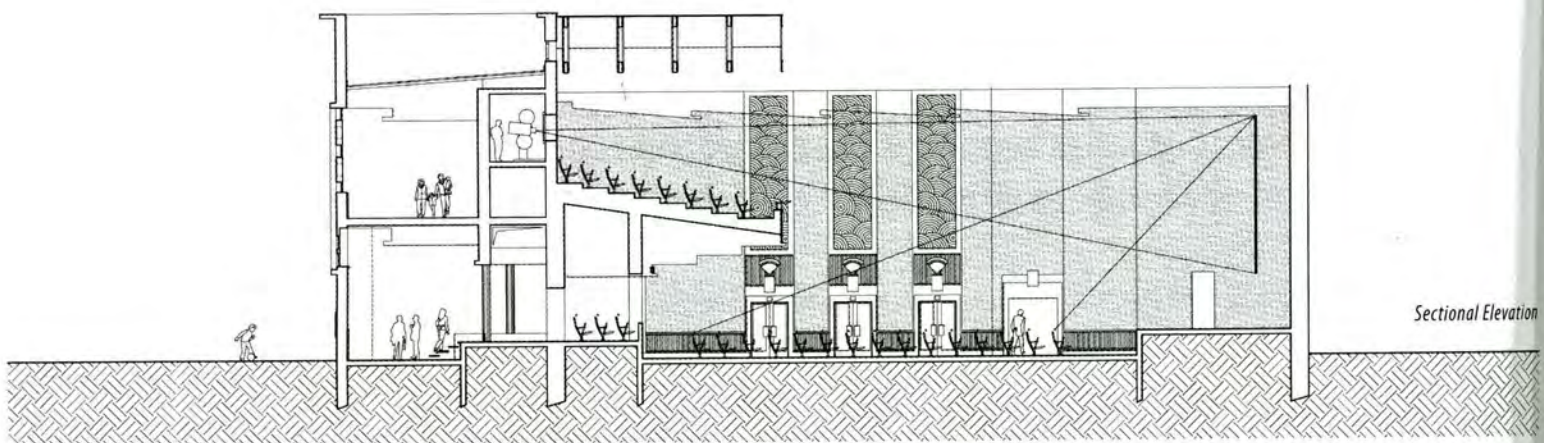
From the onset it was felt important to respect as much of the old structure while allowing for contemporary interventions of film



Plan



Plan



Sectional Elevation

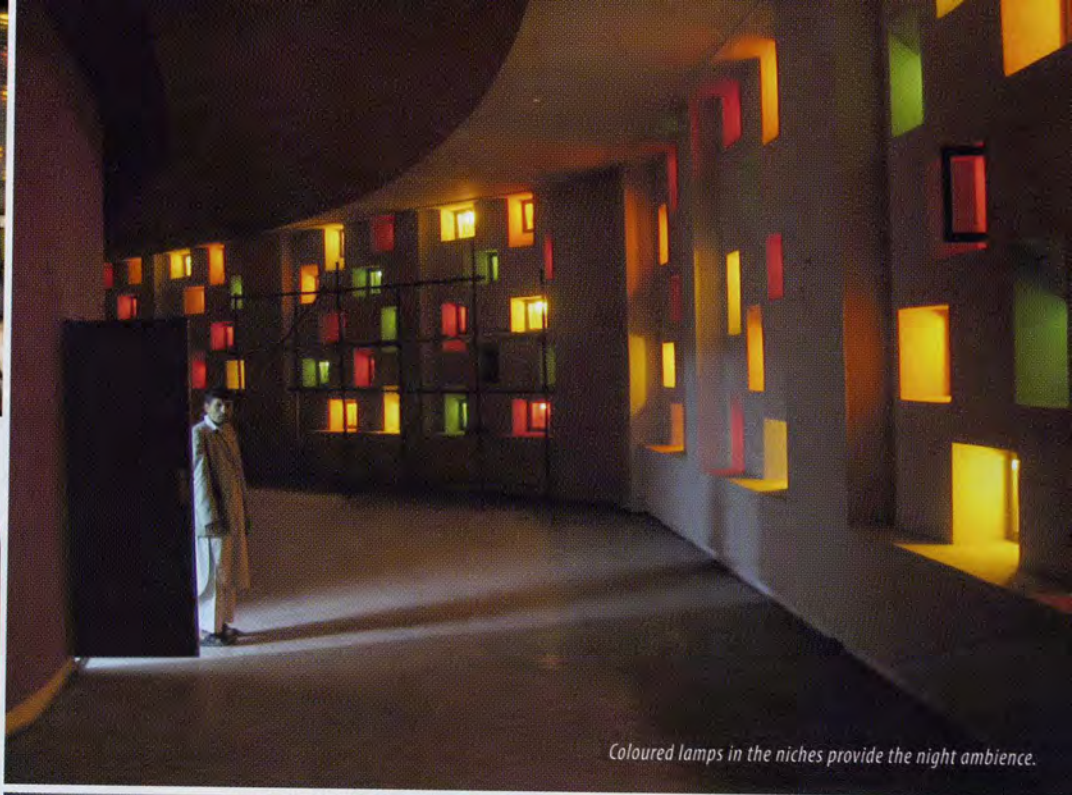




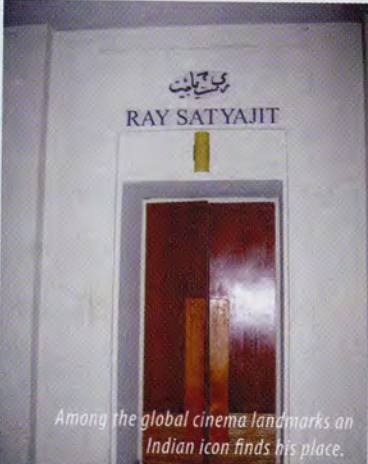
ite also became a centre for social welfare activities like the graffiti wall by children in the foreground.



Vivid splash of colour lit by the screen wall for natural lighting.



Coloured lamps in the niches provide the night ambience.



Among the global cinema landmarks an Indian icon finds his place.

#### Fact File

Initiation: June 2003  
 Completion: May 2004  
 Area: 2450sqm  
 Total capacity: 650 seats  
 Building Owner: "A Cinema for Kabul", represented by Hugues Dewavrin  
 Project Architects: Partnership of Frederic Namur Architects,  
 A&D - Jean-Paul Lemdjedri (OPC),  
 Cape Ingelec, Set, Peutz

technologies. As the building took shape, A&D took the reconstruction process as an opportunity to launch activities like vocational training for masons, artisans, and technicians, thus, reintroducing old building crafts. The site became livelier with several partnerships set up with NGOs who specialised in children's assistance in setting up educational programmes for the development. In just short of a year, the cinema hall was made available to the public where the main auditorium seated 650 viewers along with the supporting balcony, latter of which was reserved for women and families. Keeping the local sentiments in mind, two separate entries allowed the filtration of men and women from and back to the square below.

The client, comprising the Municipality of Kabul and the Afghan Film Ministry wanted the newly revitalised theatre to be a beacon for promoting educational and cultural programmes. While much of the screened material is international in nature, the architectural framing is the

achievement of the very Afghani hands. The cinema-goers are greeted by a grand hallway in marble where bilingual calligraphy communicates the names of some legendary films that mark the cinema's progression in time and also mark its position as an epitome and confluence of the city as a cross road of culture. Finally, accessing an ambient auditorium where the screen is framed by rich-burgundy Afghan fabric belts offset by plaster and woodwork that complete the acoustic treatment. The main hall leads the way upstairs to the balcony. Where the interim lobby hosts the tea room...a burst of surfaces, multiple colours and traditional wooden furniture that encourage social exchange, the very spirit of this space. A recessed screen wall, which on the outside is the front façade works as a solar control during the day and becomes a reservoir for multi-coloured lamps at night. Its pixellated transparency allows the colourful lights of the lamps to warm up the night façade. Thus the complete building reset the Ariana Cinema back into its forgotten position in socio-cultural milieu of Kabul and also winning it a "Architecture + " Award in Dubai in 2004. ■