

Heritage Report

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interior design



HERITAGE REPORT FOR:

THE GRANADA THEATRE

174-186 Powis Street,
Woolwich,
London,
SE18 6NL

Report For:
Christ Faith Tabernacle
Bethesda Buildings
56/62 Old Kent Road
London
SE14 5DB

Report Date
9th August 2011



1

Heritage Report



CONTENTS:

1.0	Introduction
2.0	General Background Information.
3.0	Building Description and Analysis
4.0	Assessment of Significance
5.0	The Impact of the Proposed Works
Annex 1:	List Description

List of Figures:

-	Detail from Ordnance Survey Images from Bing Maps
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Heritage Report



1.0 Introduction

This statement was commissioned in July 2011 to accompany an application for planning permission for the change of use of the former Granada Cinema, 174-186 Powis Street, Woolwich, London Borough of Lewisham, which is a grade II* listed building. The report was prepared by Jonathan Hosker Associates Ltd., in association with The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

2.0 Background History

The Granada Theatre, Woolwich was originally built for, and operated by, Sydney Bernstein's Granada Theatres circuit. It opened on 20th April 1937.

The overall design of the building was by architect Cecil Masey. An exception to this was the front facade of the main building, which was given a sweeping Art Deco style treatment, by the architect Reginald H. Uren. To the right of the entrance is a tall slab tower upon which was added the name of the theatre. Inside the building, the decorative treatment was applied in a Gothic style (very similar but slightly scaled down) to the interior of the Granada Theatre, Tooting. All of the interior design was carried out by Russian set designer Theodore Komisarjevsky. Painted panels in various spaces on the buildings walls were by artist Vladimir Polunin. There is a Hall of Mirrors which originally served as a waiting area for balcony patrons, with a cafe originally located on the balcony foyer.

The Granada Theatre was originally equipped with a full working stage 28ft deep, with a proscenium opening 48 feet wide x 30 feet high. There was originally a Wurlitzer 3Manual/8Rank organ with grand piano. The stage was used many times especially around the Christmas period when a pantomime would be produced and during the 1960's when 'one night only' pop music shows were going around the circuit. The Wurlitzer organ was later removed and is now installed in Neuadd Pendre, a hall in Tywyn (Towyn), North Wales.

Initially the Granada Theatre played ABC or Gaumont release film programmes (the Odeon across the road played the Odeon circuit releases). After ABC built their own Regal Cinema in 1955, the Granada Woolwich was left to play Gaumont and Independent releases. Bingo was tried out on mid-week nights from 5th December 1961 with films playing the busier weekends. It went back to full time film programmes from April 1965 until closure on 26th October 1966. The cinema was then converted into a Granada Bingo Club which opened on 30th October 1966. It was taken over by Gala Bingo from May 1991 and has continued as a Bingo hall until recently.

The building was added to the Statutory Listed at grade II on 7th January 1974. After a national review of listing grades for cinemas carried out by English Heritage in 1999 the Granada was upgraded to II* on 7th October 2000.

Heritage Report



3.0 Building Description and Analysis

The recent (2000) list description and analysis is very full and is more than adequate for the purposes of this report. The list of selected sources cited in the list might also include English Heritage's own publication, *Picture Palaces: New Life for Old Cinemas*, published in 1999.

4.0 Assessment of Significance

The principal significance of 174-186 Powis street is as an imposing public landmark building combining the external streamlined styling of its day (inspired by the then contemporary Dutch modernist work) with exceptionally elaborate Gothic styled interior work by one of Britain's leading cinema interior designers, this clearly being reflected in its Grade II* listing status. The statutory list describes the building as, '...one of the finest and most important cinema interiors in Britain...'

In 2008 English Heritage published *Conservation Principles*, which identified four principal heritage values which should be taken into account when assessing significance. These values are Evidential, deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity; Historical, deriving from the ways in which past people events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present; Aesthetic, deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; Communal, deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory. The former Granada Cinema ranks highly in all four categories.

4

5.0 The Impact of the Proposed Works

This statement is to accompany an application for change of use. In itself the change of use will have no impact on the significance of the listed building or on its historic fabric. The building is capable of being used for its intended new purpose (a place of worship) with no significant alterations. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent will be sought as necessary for any works to the building.

Heritage Report



Annex 1: List Description

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: GRANADA CINEMA

List Entry Number: 1212651

Location

GRANADA CINEMA, 174-186, POWIS STREET SE18

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Greater London Authority

District: Greenwich

District Type: London Borough

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 31-Dec-1973

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

[Legacy System Information: The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.]

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 397131

Heritage Report



[Asset Groupings: This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.]

List Entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

786/8/781 POWIS STREET SE18
31-DEC-1973 Nos. 174-186 (Even)
Granada Cinema

II*

Former Granada cinema, built 1936-7 for Granada Theatres. Architects: Cecil Masey (1881- 1960) and Reginald Harold Uren (1903-88) with interior design by Theodore Komisarjevsky (1882-1954). Brick and rendered facade. Corner site, with double-height auditorium with balcony and stage, set behind large foyer, and with tower to right.

EXTERIOR: Asymmetrical curved facade to Powis Street with entrance on left and tower on right. Continuous canopy at string level. To the left, a line of five tall windows divided by brick and render pilasters, under a simple canopy. Thin glazing bars to provide fifteen panes in vertical style. Line of five more narrow windows at second floor level, each with a thin canopy. To the right, a long line of five horizontal windows enclosed by a concrete frame, except on the right where they abut the tower and emerge on the other side. Each window is divided into six lights by glazing bars. Blank brickwork above these windows only broken by the tower which then rises above the parapet. Attic storey over the entrance end, with horizontal rendered section under another canopy (which originally acted as a background to the name of the cinema) and then three windows with brick pilasters

Heritage Report



under a rendered strip. Concrete parapet capping. Roof of foyer block not seen. The outer face of the tower has a rendered strip, which originally held a glazed fin that lit up at night. At the top of the tower an open area under a flat roof originally formed part of this illumination scheme. Concrete rear wall to tower. Stock brick auditorium wall to the left of the entrance facade was originally hidden by other property. The seen storey stage-dock entry is rendered but the rest is of dark brown brickwork with string courses (interrupted over the scene-dock to enliven the composition) and mansard roof. Flat-roofed two-storey extension on the left, with an exit aperture at ground level and a line of four horizontal windows in the upper storey. Rear auditorium wall in Fletton bricks with buttresses. Pitched roof over auditorium.

I NTERIOR: Five sets of entrance doors into outer foyer or vestibule. Outer foyer walls enriched with coupled attached columns in chevron profile and with Romanesque stiff-leaf capitals. Rope moulding on transverse ceiling beams. Three sets of glazed and stained timber doors with twisted horizontal wrought-iron bars and cast-iron 'antiqued' handles. Double-height inner foyer with galleries on three sides, reached by way of stairs of 'T plan' type on the far wall. Balustrades to galleries and stairs in subdued Gothic form. Newel posts with clustered colonettes. On the back wall there is an elaborate gilded quasi-medieval panelling feature divided into nine bays by pilasters of clustered shafts with stiff-leaf capitals. Each bay is round-headed, with scroll and foliage decoration in the tympana, except for the central one -which has a pediment with a roundel and ribbon mouldings. The five centre bays are subdivided into twin Gothic two-centred arches with stiff-leaf capitals, and have fluted backgrounds. The two outer bays also have twin arches but the backgrounds are decorated with figures (some playing instruments), painted in Italian Renaissance style by Vladimir Polunin (1880-1957), a compatriot of Komisarjevsky. Coffered ceiling with painted quatrefoils. Large central chandelier, four subsidiary ones and six pairs of wall lights all in Gothic style. The gallery originally served as a cafe. This extended into a room, now partitioned off as offices, over the vestibule. On the left glazed and stained timber doors lead into the auditorium.

Large double-height auditorium in Gothic style. The ante-proscenium splays are divided into three sections. Each is separated by pilasters. The central feature is a monumental Romanesque style arch with jambs of seven engaged columns (alternately banded and twisted) and a tympanum of openwork foliage designed to disguise a ventilation duct, above the emergency exit extending up into a tall pointed gable decorated with crockets and a finial. The space inside both gables is decorated with a large central roundel (subdivided by a cusped cinquefoil) and three subsidiary ones with quatrefoils. The stained timber exit doors themselves are framed by detached columns under a round arch with a dog-tooth moulding and a tympanum decorated with a stylized stiff-leaf motif. Flanking panels: above the dado (with more Gothic decoration) are painted panels representing rampant lions and

Heritage Report



unicorns set in stylized backgrounds (possibly also by Vladimir Polunin). Each panel has the inscription 'Mon Seul Desir'.

The upper stages of the ante-proscenium splays are also split into three sections with superimposed rows of cusped niches (interspersed by arrow-heads) flanked by tall single niches nearest and tall coupled niches furthest from the proscenium. An additional section each side further back has exit doors (with small glazed quatrefoil panels) at ground level, the termination of the balcony front and superimposed backlit four-light stained glass two-centre windows -the upper ones having plate-tracery incorporating blind quatrefoils and a roundel containing six smaller roundels. The proscenium is formed from flanking corbelled buttresses and a line of quatrefoils. Above is a Gothic canopy of five trefoils under crocketed gables separated by demi-buttresses against a background of more trefoiled niches. The serpentine front of the balcony has stiff-leaf decoration. Balcony soffit with further Gothic grill decoration on the beams. Elaborately coffered ceiling over front stalls area in dull red and green. Ceiling over balcony in three sections, again with complex coffering. Two large Gothic chandeliers over the front stalls area. The entrance to the balcony foyer has triple attached columns with composite capitals. The balcony foyer (the 'Hall of Mirrors') is of seven bays divided by mirror-faced pilasters. Each inner side bay contains a mirror above low benches, with twisted columns in the jambs and under a trefoil head, flanked by columns with composite capitals. The outer side bays form an arcade in front of an 'aisle'. Four French tear-drop chandeliers. In the aisle is an original table with four-arch stretchers. Pitched coffered ceiling. The balcony is reached through entrances at each end of this hall, with Gothic panelling over both.

'Screen' feature placed in the angles where the balcony widens out in the centre of the auditorium. These have five niches with fibrous plaster grilles under crocketed steeply pitched gables. Entry to the balcony is through two side vomitories. Nine cusped niches on each side wall, glazed and leaded. Cross-over balustrades of twisted metal. Lower ceiling section under projection suite.

ANALYSIS: Included at Grade II* as one of the finest and most important cinema interiors in Britain, being one of the only two with convincing Gothic decoration. It is only slightly less elaborate than its sister cinema at Tooting, by the same team but without Uren, who was brought in to provide a dramatic streamlined front in the face (literally) of the competing Odeon cinema opposite which opened in the same year. Although converted to bingo in 1966 most of the internal decoration survives unaltered. The figurative painting by the Russian stage designer Vladimir Polunin is also of particular interest.

Sources:

Dennis Sharp, *The Picture Palace*, Hugh Evelyn: London, 1969, pp.112-4

David Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, Architectural Press: London, 1980, pp.139-141

Heritage Report



Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, London 2: South*, Penguin Books: London 1983, pp.83, 242,291

Richard Gray, *Cinemas in Britain*, Lund Humphries: London, 1996, pp.78-9, 135

Allen Eyles, *The Granada Theatres*, Cinema Theatre Association: London, 1998, pp.79, 81-5,225

3

Listing NGR: TQ4323679160

Selected Sources

1. **Book Reference** - *Author:* Allen Eyles - *Title:* The Granada Theatres - *Date:* 1998 - *Page References:* 81-85
2. **Book Reference** - *Author:* David Atwell - *Title:* Cathedrals of the Movies - *Date:* 1980 - *Page References:* 139-141
3. **Book Reference** - *Author:* Dennis Sharp - *Title:* The Picture Palace - *Date:* 1969 - *Page References:* 112-114
4. **Book Reference** - *Author:* Richard Gray - *Title:* Cinemas in Britain One Hundred Years of Cinema Architecture - *Date:* 1996 - *Page References:* 78-79
5. **Article Reference** - *Author:* Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry - *Title:* London II South - *Date:* 1983 - *Journal Title:* The Buildings of England
6. **Book Reference** - *Author:* English Heritage - *Title:* Picture Palaces: New Life for Old Cinemas - *Date:* 1999,

9

Map

National Grid Reference: TQ 43236 79160

The below map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale.

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[The above copy shows the entry on 10-Aug-2011 at 09:35:32].

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Aerial Shots Cutesy of Bing Maps:-



A206 John Wilson Street Elevation

11



Powis Street Elevation

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View from direction of Hare Street



Woolwich High Street Elevation

Heritage Report

Historic Photo Images:-



1960's image whilst operating as a Granada Bingo Hall [Noted – shows 5no. panels to front elevation still as windows / shows high level grills (above 'GRANADA' name to fresh air intake room)].

13



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19

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22

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23

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