Abstract

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Rebranding Cairo’s Downtown Cinemas: Can Performances Resurrect Abundant Heritage?

Cairo’s Downtown cinemas were once masterpieces of architecture, screening golden age movies plus witnessing important events. Nowadays, few are still working, while many are ready to be demolished. The best conservation for historic buildings is managing change caused by time. One way to make this happen is smart engaging re-use, thus continue to retain value to current and future generations. Local government and private companies have tried to resuscitate Cairo’s silver screens. This revitalization started with simple face lifting, then developed to rebranding with creative re-use introducing new functions. A key to this creative re-use is across disciplines new forms of art, music, and media performances. This paper aims to explore four re-use performances bringing the insight of art and media into the field of heritage management. First, “Nassim El Raqs” organized “When dance meets heritage” in Theatre Cinema Eldorado. Second, Radio Theatre re-used to host live-shows “Al-Bernameg” and “AblaFahita”. Third, Zawya - located in cinema Odeon - launched as the first art-house cinema in Egypt. Last, Teatro Independent Theatre opened their interactive performance “The Metamorphosis” at cinema Elkahira. This paper ends with a framework for rebranding cinemas comprises both the challenges facing the re-use and proposing community-oriented marketing strategy.