

FRAME



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Text

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Photos

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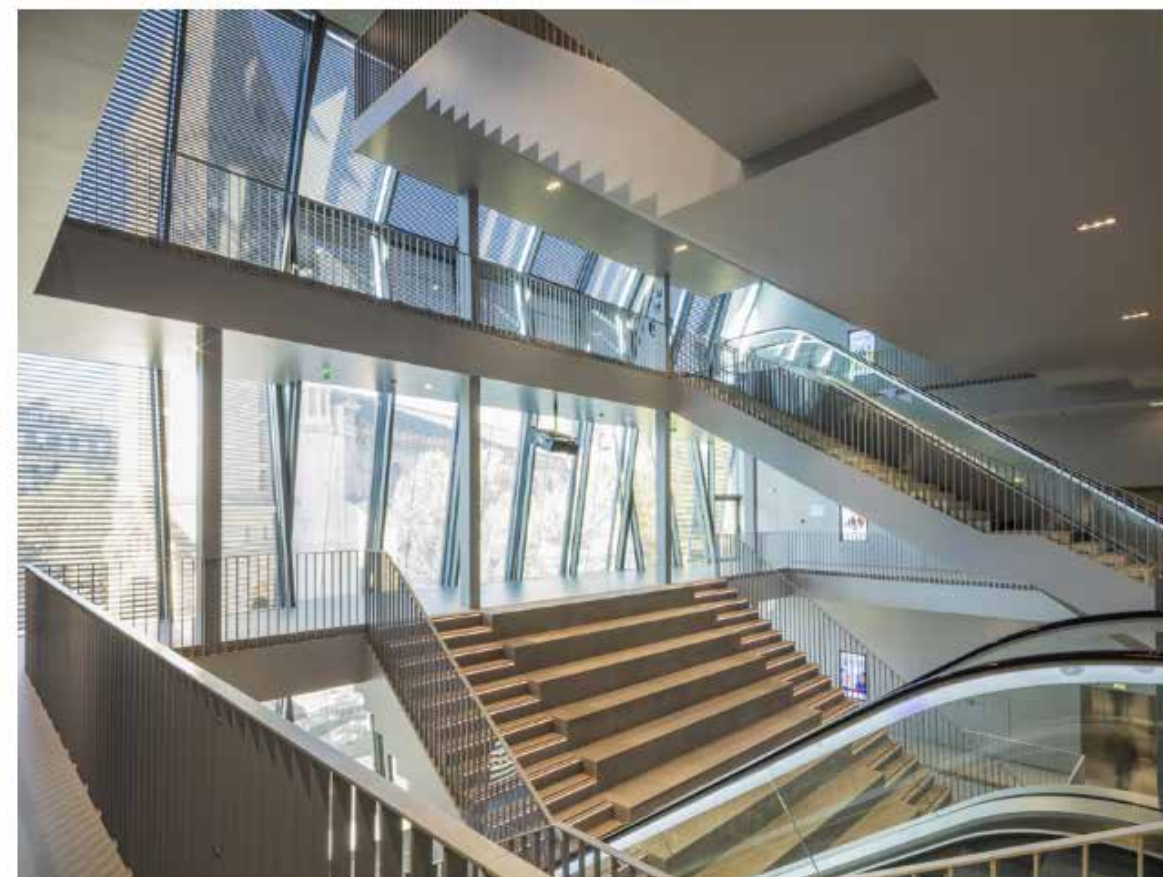
Renovation

Stairs

Manuelle Gautrand uses steps and folds to immerse the audience with film

PARIS — Every architect loves a good staircase. That's basically a fact, right? In any case, Manuelle Gautrand's renovation of the Gaumont Alésia Cinema in the French capital is full of them. Wedged between a seven-storey apartment and a low-rise retail arcade, the eight-screen venue has already been through multiple changes since its opening as a 2800-seat auditorium in 1921. The latest development has two main objectives: to visually identify the individual auditoriums as physical spaces; and to bring the façade to life with moving images, immersing the public in a world of film and cinema.

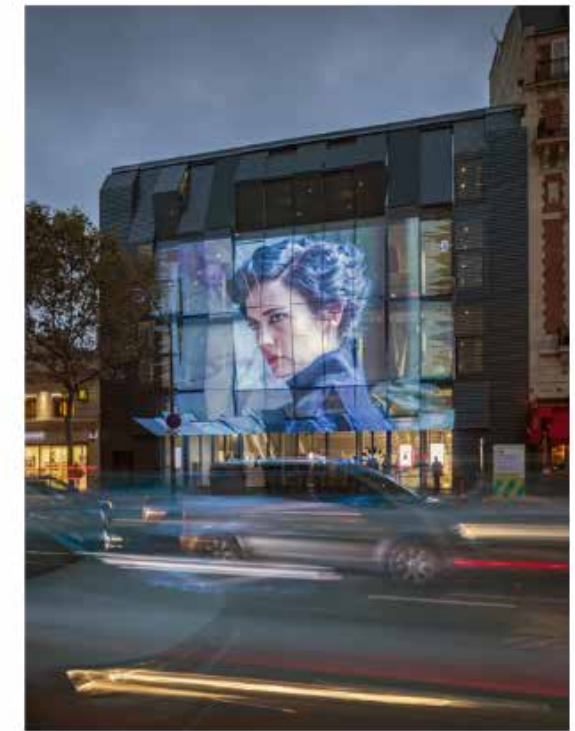
The screening rooms — now stacked perpendicular or parallel to one another like Jenga blocks, each arranged to be visible and identifiable — slot together to form the bulk of the internal volume. Amongst this, however, are the steps and stairwells that make the biggest impression within the interior space. 'Every movement in the cinema, you are guided by stairs,' the architect explains. 'You spend time walking up and down them, they direct you to your film theatre, your seat, the exit. We really wanted to emphasize all those journeys into an iconic scenography.'



The stepped vernacular is not just used for circulation but pass overhead too, according to the gradient of the theatre seating on the level above. 'Making the tiered seating visible on the underside forms magnificent stepped ceilings,' the architect describes. 'These sculptural forms are then extended into the adjacent space to create partially tiered lobby areas. They make places for informal projections; supplementary spaces where, yet again, cinema is present and disseminated.' The aim, of course, is to keep spectators entertained in a comfortable environment while they await the main feature. 'It is almost as though the stalls in the film theatres have reached out beyond their boundaries to welcome the public into a universe bathed in film and projections.'

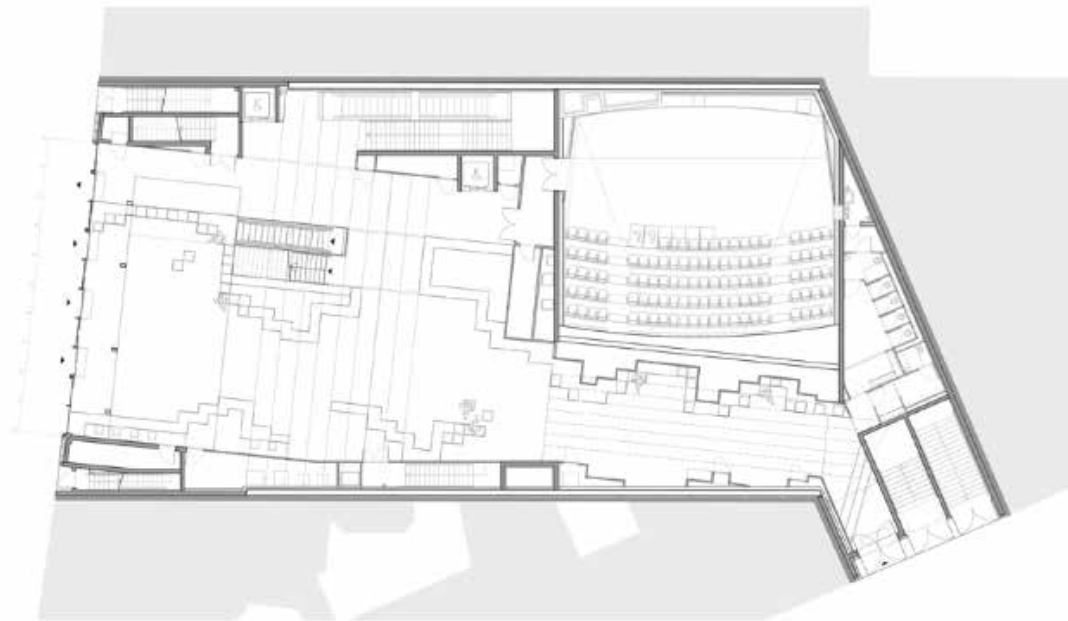


The cinematic complex contains the typical popcorn stands and ticket booths, expected of any modern-day movie hall. The spacious public foyer, which runs the full depth of the building, is announced by an entrance clad in 500 sqm of LED-covered glass, concentrated in thin strips down the front of the building. The eye-catching façade – which can be seen from all directions around the avenue – further communicates the multimedia message.

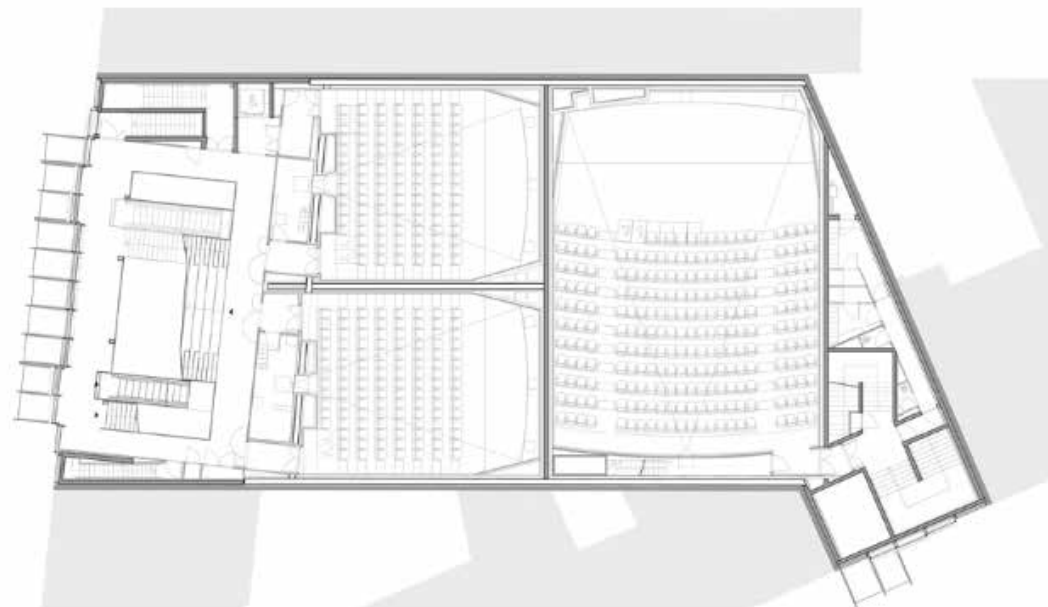


The folds protrude horizontally for a further 3 m over the pavement, forming an inviting canopy which ‘provides the public with different images, this time almost within reaching distance.’ The architect continues: ‘The pleated form allows a lot of surfaces which are orientated towards the pavement, so that the public can really be involved. It gives the sensation of walking into the picture as you go into the building.’

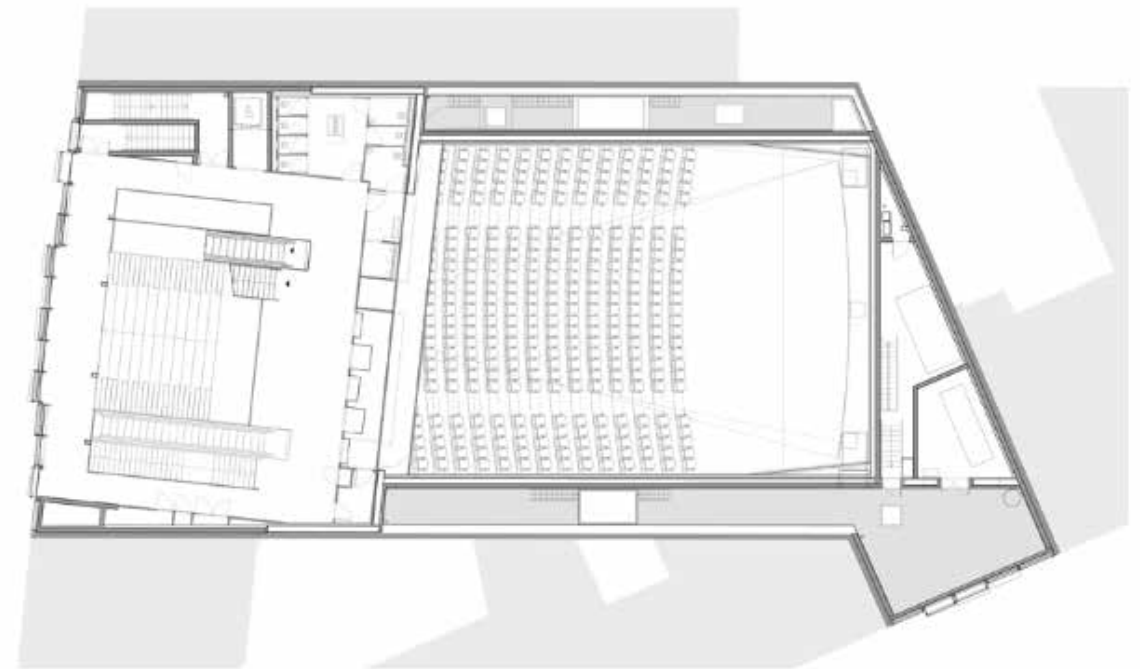
It all adds to the theme of cinematic immersion. Manuelle Gautrand brings audience involvement to the forefront of the project in an attention-grabbing renovation that makes fully clear that ‘film’ is the inspiration behind every decision.



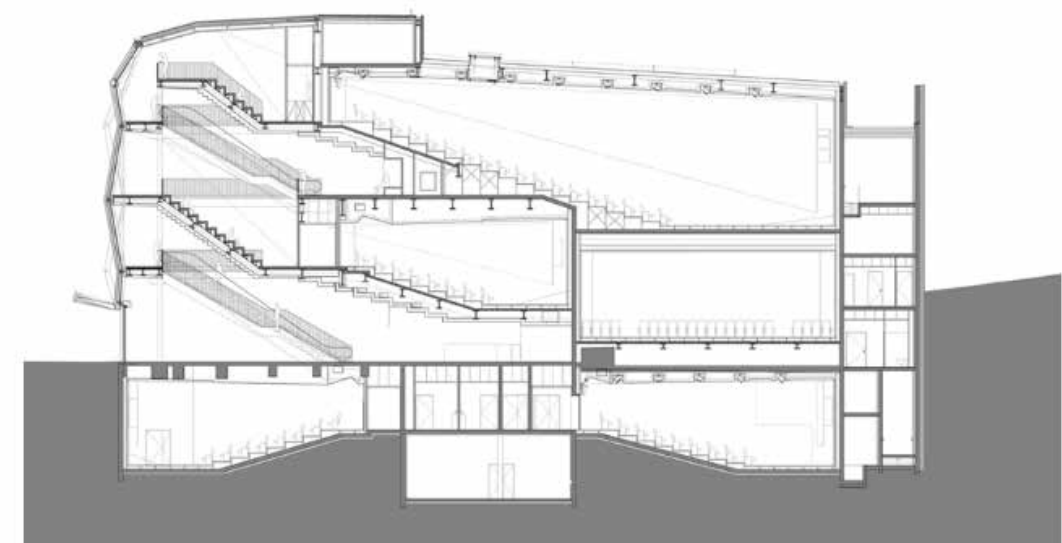
Plan — Ground floor



Plan — First floor



Plan — Third floor



Section

manuelle-gautrand.com

Location 73 Avenue du Général Leclerc, Paris, France