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CIRCLE GAME

Wuhan Wushang Mall Cinema

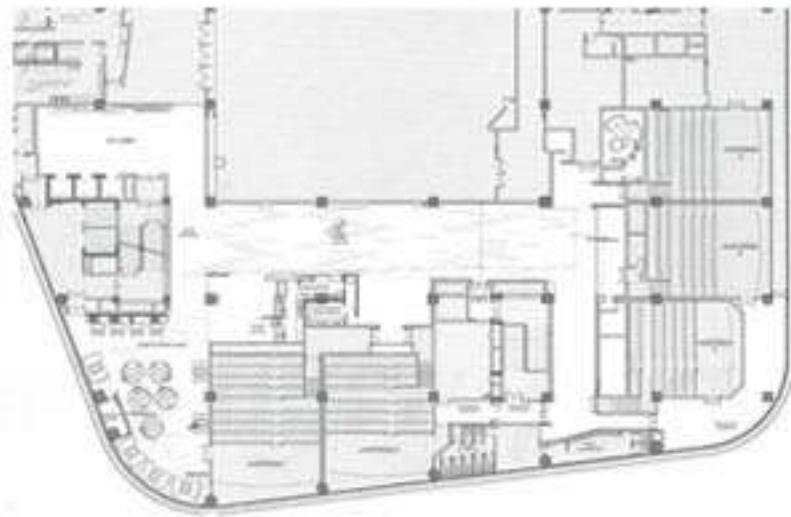
Wuhan, China

One Plus Partnership

Photography by Jiangnan Photography and Ajay Lee



Cinema-design specialist One Plus Partnership has carved out a beneficial niche in one of the few countries where movie-going is still commercially viable. With the explosion of worthy content to fill the screens, and a comparatively inexhaustible supply of viewers, China is a boon to anyone connected to film. This project is an expansion of an existing cinema in Wuhan that adds five new auditoria – proof itself of the health of the sector. Of course, the whole scene is to One Plus' advantage, since the Hong Kong studio has produced a series of cinema projects in recent years, with an identifiable approach: give each location a theme that drives the design.



In the case of Wuhai, the theme chosen is based on the now-disused metal film-reel canister. Once upon a time, these fat, round containers were ubiquitous in the movie world; they protected film reels from damage during transport, which was essential because 'movies' were driven or flown all over the world to reach auditorium projectors. One Plus abstracts the canisters into a series of discs, which then decorate the lobby areas in Wuhai.

In the design, the 'reels' have grown in size, to a diameter of 2.8m each, the better to produce drama when they are combined and suspended from the high ceilings. The plates overlap and are fixed at different heights, in order to present a composition that appears unique from different angles. They are made of aluminium printed with wood grain patterns that give them a slight texture.

The colour palette here is very muted - a light earth tone set off by teal green furniture upholstery in the lounge area. The marble flooring incorporates stripes, suggesting shadows thrown down by the discs overhead. Near the ticket counter, the circles descend to the floor level to guide patrons through the space. Then, inside the actual auditoria, the discs are remembered in smaller versions of sound-absorbing material that are cantilevered off the side walls and hung from the ceiling. All else is blacked out.

One Plus Partnership has created another interesting outing for movie fans. Most of them probably won't grasp the connection to film-reel canisters, because digitisation is now so entrenched. But no matter, the circles floating through the lobby spaces carry a visual impact in their own right. Dim the lights...