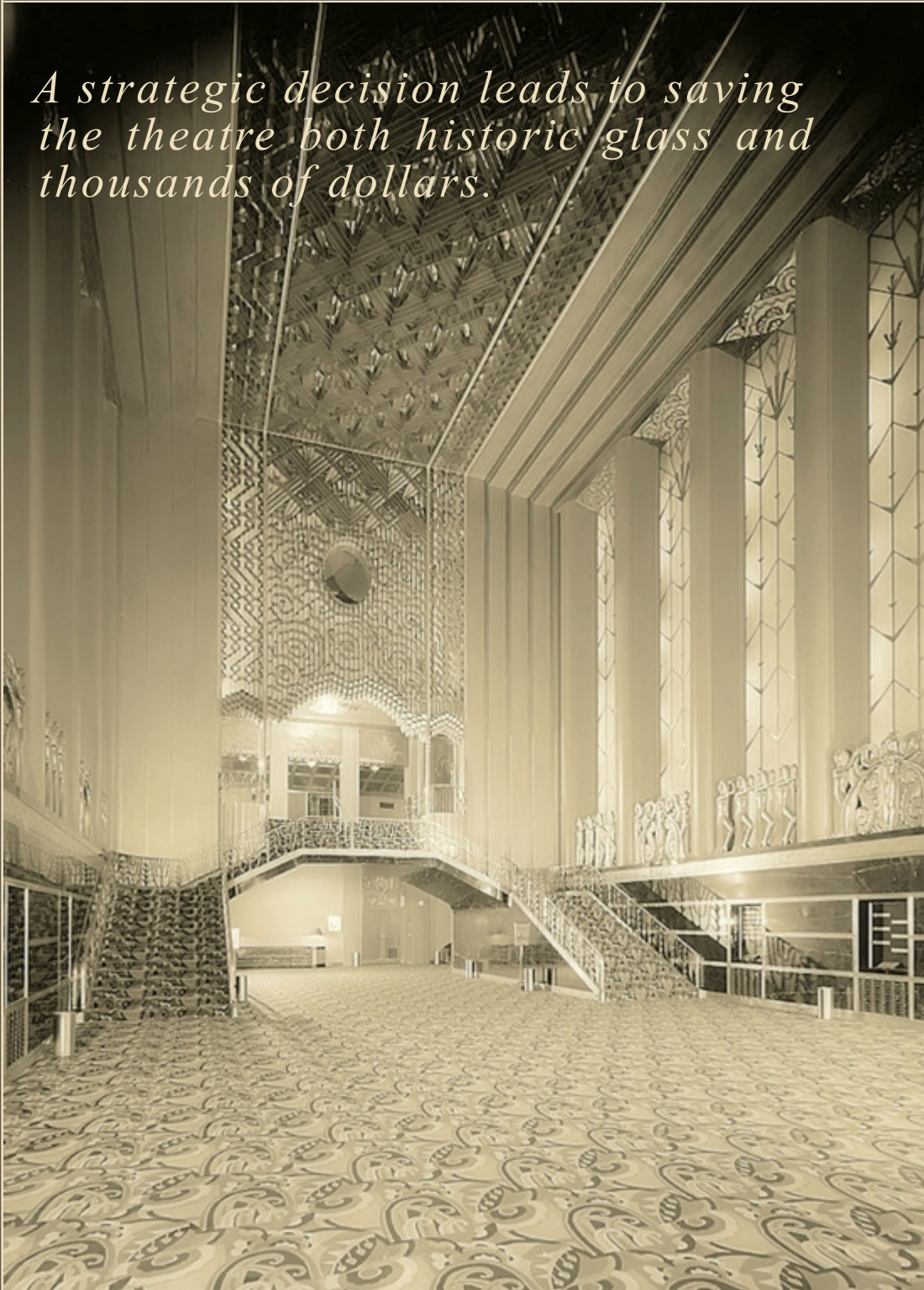


Paramount Theatre

A strategic decision leads to saving the theatre both historic glass and thousands of dollars.



A CASE STUDY By Jann Fitzgerald

OAKLAND'S

Paramount Theatre is one of the finest remaining examples of Art Deco design in the United States. Designed by renowned San Francisco architect Timothy L. Pflueger and completed in late 1931, it was one of the first Depression-era buildings to incorporate and integrate the work of numerous creative artists into its architecture.

After its initial brief blaze of "movie palace" glory in the 1930's, this remarkable theatre suffered three decades of neglect and decline until its rescue. A painstaking and authentic restoration was completed in 1973. In 1976, The Paramount Theatre became a California Registered Historic



fabric as possible, to repair or restore rather than replace." As a renovation professional, David is vividly aware of the high public image that the Paramount Theatre commands.

Glass is far better to restore because it is difficult to match color and clarity. As an example, the French Mirrors in the Paramount pose a particular challenge. They are composed of large rectangular panes, held in place with

and restoration services would be exactly what he needed to accomplish his goals for the Paramount Theatre.

After analyzing the scope of what was needed for the Paramount, David started the window repairs. Renovation in a historic theatre such as the Paramount, was particularly challenging in that the risks of working with such old glass were high. The first step in this delicate, high profile project was to work in such a way to minimize the vibration and heat from the repair methods. Mirrors are particularly problematic and there are often slight fissures in older glass.

David said, "The restoration service was everything I would want and expect. The two Vitrolite tables were

"In the past, any badly damaged glass had to be replaced at a great cost. I was happy to discover that our glass could be repaired and restored. Replacing the glass had been our only option, until now."

David Boysel, Paramount Theatre Curator/Restorer

Landmark, and in 1977 it was declared a National Historic Landmark. The Paramount was placed in the highest category of historic buildings for both its architectural and historic significance.

Restored to its original splendor and fully upgraded to modern technical standards, the Paramount now serves all the arts. The Paramount Theatre is



one of the San Francisco Bay Area's premier performing arts facilities, and the home of the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

Theatre restoration has been meticulously conserved by David Boysel, Curator/Restorer. On working with historic buildings such as the Paramount, Mr. Boysel shared his philosophy on renovation: "We look for ways to preserve as much original

decorative metal studs at the corners. Close-up, there is a glittery finish of the original silvering which is not present in new mirrors. These panes would cost at least \$500 each to replace.

Scratches started to appear in the old glass along with some minor vandalism. All in all, ten mirror panes, a large mirrored door, and two Vitrolite tables were showing wear and tear. The mirrored door was unique because it was one of a matched pair. Its decorative beveling, in addition to being drilled for a lock, presented an even more challenging problem. In the past one of the doors had been duplicated at great cost in time and money.

Two original and very decorative metal consoles with black Vitrolite glass tops needed attention. The console tops had many minor surface scratches, which destroyed the original high shine of the black glass surface. Vitrolite is no longer made, so the tops are both original and irreplaceable.

It became clear to David that the damaged glass would need to be restored or replaced. But, the project would have to be put on hold until there was enough budget to pay for replacement.

After a cost analysis study, David quickly realized that the glass repair



Ladies lounge with Vitrolite table

brought back to their original highlyreflective and elegant look."

By restoring each of the scratched mirrors and tables, the Paramount Theatre saved at least \$7,000 in choosing repair instead of replacement. The \$7,000 figure does not include the value of the Vitrolite tables—they are irreplaceable. The decision to restore instead of replacing the glass not only saved a great deal of money, but helped preserve the integrity of the theatre.



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