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PRESERVATION

Revue process

So a lovely old 'nabe' needs a new marquee. What should its form be?

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SUNDAY IDEAS EDITOR

Witness the power of pictures. Take the one directly right.

Are happy memories triggering? Are you yearning to swing over there this afternoon in a wire-wheeled sedan with sidemounts, to take in a movie?

"Nothing lights up a street . . . like a movie marquee," theatre historian David Naylor has written, in praise of the movie business's long-running, on-the-spot architectural advertising.

So evocative is this particular view that it is fueling a debate about the theatre itself, which is the much-loved Revue cinema on Roncesvalles Ave.

The Revue is very much in business (four shows today, including *The Golden Compass* at 2 and *La Vie En Rose* at 4.15), after the community rallied to its support when the Festival chain of repertories moved out a few years ago.

But there was a limbo period — perhaps the building felt abandoned — and late one winter night last year the great marquee, Hollywood's glitzy 1935 metal stamp on the genteel 1911 theatre, came crashing down onto the sidewalk.

Fast-forward to now: should it be put back up?

Going by the photo, it's a no-brainer.

"There is a tremendous feeling of nostalgia for this cinema, and I'd identify that with the marquee," movie patron Scott Hyrtle, 40, told a public meeting in the Revue's auditorium on March 22.

But look at the wider picture. There are sub-plots, issues.

Like, how much? Oh, hundreds of thousands, roughly, to bring back 1935. The Revue's angel owner, a neighbourhood resident, was bravely heard saying: "We shouldn't let money be an object." (But for his sake, and any fundraisers, maybe someone should.)

Yet the most compelling arguments, to and fro, are philosophical. As Revue Film Society spokesperson Ellen Moorhouse said in a statement, "The Revue's façade



IMAGES COURTESY REVUE FILM SOCIETY AND ERA ARCHITECTS INC.

Above, a classic Toronto 'nabe' (neighbourhood movie theatre) in full Hollywood regalia and, below, a digital proposal by ERA Architects Inc. that would restore the cinema closer to its 1911 appearance. "The Revue's façade represents a classic dilemma for preservation experts."



represents a classic dilemma for preservation experts."

In short: Do you restore to original, reproduce 1935, or do something altogether new?

Toronto preservation architects ERA Architects Inc. were hired by the non-profit film society to wrestle with this question, with principal Michael McClelland presenting alternative proposals at the public meeting, one of which is shown above.

On the one hand, many of the

building's 1911 features remain.

To my eye, those sets of pillars, the Parthenon-ish roof peak, and the stylish blocks (dentils) under the roof cornice hint at the dramatic, turn-of-19th-century World's Fairs, phenomena of the age whose gleaming pavilions repopularized classical architecture in North America.

On the original, there would have been no Hollywood marquee, making restoration of the 1911 appearance simpler and cheaper than re-

building the 1935 marquee, suggested McClelland.

Though there is no known photo of the theatre from that early date to trigger our nostalgia or tell us exactly what the theatre looked like, the bricks and mortar are mostly still there.

So do we now have a cheaper, more authentic no-brainer option?

Think again:

"At 4 o'clock I was at work, checking the Internet to see what movie was on," Peter Fleming, another lo-

cal resident, told the meeting. "I was here at 6:30 (to see it)."

His point was not so much that marquees are obsolete — does anyone really know? — but that "this is 2008. We need to respond to various layers of tradition, but not be hampered by them."

The architects are indeed weighing how new technologies, such as projection and LED lighting, might contribute to this preservation project.

For the building, some risks are apparent: "We have a lot of different opportunities, but they are going to look different," McClelland said.

But the benefits are promising. It may be possible through LED light, image projection and use of screens to match a classic marquee's urbanity and allure without its vices, such as incandescent light bulbs' demand for energy.

New technology may fix an old, occupational hazard at repertories: that of climbing ladders to change the letters spelling the movies' names.

What direction seems likely?

Film itself had yet to find its own architectural shape as a new media when the Revue was built. "In the 1930s, it was all about 'we've got sound, we've got Technicolor,'" proclaimed on marquees, reflects McClelland.

Today's solution, he projects, may be a hybrid of traditions and new ideas, or even a "hybrid of hybrids."

But when you think about it, the requirement is still pretty simple: to get us to walk up to the wicket, buy a ticket, and go in.

MICROSCOPE IN THE ARCTIC: A WEEK'S WORTH OF SCIENCE NEWS ON ICE, BY PETER CALAMAI

For three weeks, *Microscope* is taking readers to the Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Amundsen*, a working icebreaker transformed into a mobile Arctic research centre. In late October, the ship arrived near Banks Island in the Western Arctic, where it will stay until late August, providing hundreds of researchers a unique opportunity to investigate environmental issues during all four seasons.

MINIATURE MARVELS

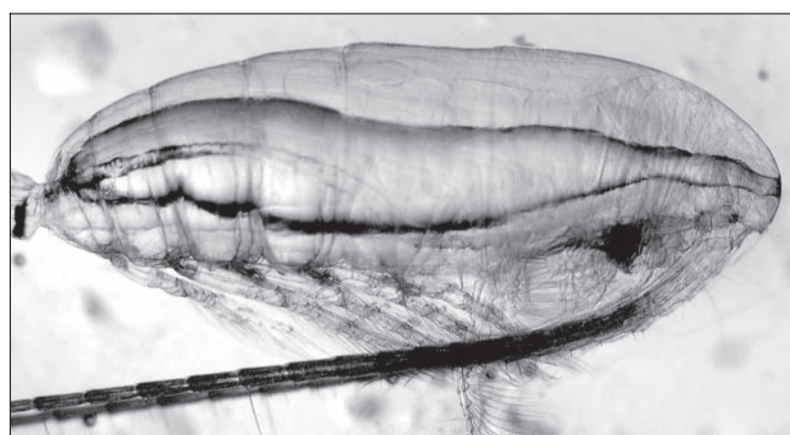
Stig Falk-Petersen makes a strong case for the little guy pictured here being the most important animal on Earth. That's because *Calanus hyperboreus* and two closely related species of copepods are especially good at bulking up with the best kind of fats.

Copepods are miniature crustaceans that roam the ocean. These particular pudgy copepods support the food chain in the Arctic, all the way up to whales.

Yet the largest is under a centimetre in length, and there's still an awful lot that science doesn't know about them — especially how they'll be affected by climate change.

A fascination with such questions — and with copepod fats in general — is what brings marine biologist Falk-Petersen from the Norwegian Polar Institute in Tromsø to spend five weeks on the *Amundsen*.

In humans and many other animals, body fat makes up less than a tenth of total weight. Between two-thirds and three-



GERALD DARNIS PHOTO

Despite its tiny size, the *Calanus hyperboreus* plays a huge role in the Arctic food chain. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the hyperboreus consists of fats, much of it carried in its special lipid sac.

quarters of the hyperboreus consists of fats; most of that is in the form of something called a wax ester, carried in a special lipid sac.

These wax esters are the Arctic's high-octane food, containing twice as much energy as the same weight of carbohydrates. The copepods manufacture the esters through a biosynthesis process that is the ultimate in evolutionary adaptation to the harsh polar climate.

"That is the reason we have seals and seabirds in the Arctic and why whales migrate all the way up from the equator to feed here," says Falk-Petersen.

The scale of all this is enormous. One of Falk-Petersen's colleagues has calculated that the population of London, England, could be fed for

six years using the amount of food energy contained in the copepods that herring in the Norwegian Sea consume in just one summer.

In turn, copepod-eating fish such as herring and capelin are prey for seabirds, seals, and the blue and minke whales that migrate annually to the Arctic. Polar bears dine on seals, as do walrus; the Inuit dine on all of the above.

Without the virtually unknown *Calanus*, however, this food chain would collapse. They rise from their winter retreat 2,000 metres deep to reach the surface just in time for the spring appearance of algae under the ice and in open water. Biologists call this a bloom, because the brown mass appears even more quickly than a meadow of early

spring flowers.

The copepods voraciously graze this bloom, arriving when the algae are richest in the polyunsaturated fatty acids essential for development of membranes and gonads.

But they do more. In an internal chemical factory, they convert protein from the algae into fatty alcohol, which they combine with fatty acid, also from the algae, to produce the all-important wax esters, those high-energy fats.

One of the mysteries of this aspect of the Arctic environment revolves around the bowhead whale. Scientists believe it consumes *Calanus* and other copepods directly, sieving them from the water as it cruises the ocean. Yet that implies the copepods travel in densely packed shoals, which have not yet been detected.

There's also the seabird known as Little Auk or Dovekie (*Alle alle*). It dives in the ocean to 50 metres and picks out individual copepods with its beak. Hundreds are stored in cheek sacs to be flown back to the nest to feed the young auk.

The Dovekie can somehow preferentially catch the biggest and fattest *Calanus hyperboreus* even when marine biologists such as Falk-Petersen are having problems netting any.

"The birds are smarter than the scientists," he says.

So far, research on the *Amundsen* may close that gap. Working with Falk-Petersen to

analyze samples is Anette Wold, a research technician from the Polar Institute.

Meanwhile, Tobias Tamelander, a post-doctoral fellow from the University of Tromsø, is investigating an equally vital but less glamorous ecological contribution of copepods. Their fecal pellets are one of the major ways for vital carbon to reach the dark ocean floor and provide energy for life there.

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nationaltheatre.org.uk/fram

Roald Amundsen was the famous Norwegian polar explorer after whom this icebreaker is named. An even more celebrated Norwegian scientist-explorer was Fridtjof Nansen, who came to fame by being the first to cross the Greenland ice cap, using skis rather than the sledges of previous failed attempts.

Nansen's subsequent accomplishment fill books: designing what many consider the epitome of polar ships, the *Fram*; penetrating farther north on foot in 1895 than anyone previously; discovering that a warm Atlantic current circulates around the Arctic Ocean; and serving as Norway's first Ambassador to the U.K. and the first High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations.

This life of exploration is the subject of a Tony Harrison play premiering next month at Britain's National Theatre in London. Micro has his tickets.