

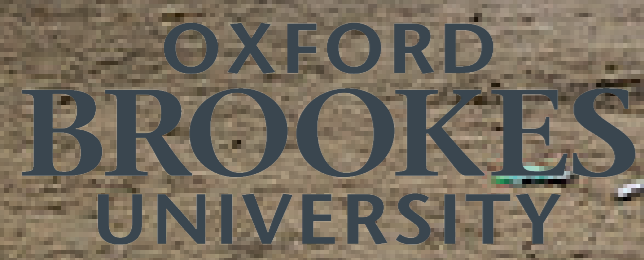
# THE ARCHITECTURAL STRIVE TO REJUVENATE THE ANGOLAN URBAN FABRIC

To what extent can modern designers revive the original urban skin of Angolan cine esplanadas, ultimately allowing users to differentiate and appreciate between the stylistic disciplines: the authentic culture of Angola; the modern culture and the amalgamation of the two contingencies?

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Fig 1. Cine Estúdio, also known in Namibe as "spaceship" due to its form (Lafforgue, 2018).



## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Angola's struggle between tradition and modernity through the lens of the country's old open-air cinemas and new enclosed cinemas. Growing up in Luanda, Angola, most of my childhood memories are formed around cinemas. The movie-going experience has always involved multiple trips to the malls, in which modern cinemas are integrated. At the bottom of my memory, are also the recollections of the lament of family members about the abandonment and degradation of the old independent cinemas scattered throughout the city, in each of these trips. Looking at old cinemas as a symbol of resistance and culture fascinates me, especially after hearing from family members who have had the opportunity to witness and live the unique experience of these open-air cinemas or cine-esplanadas, and the cultural practices that they made possible.

The lack of plans to restore and protect these unique cultural apparatus is well known, this sparked my interest in choosing Angolan Cinemas for my dissertation, as it would allow me to analyse and comprehend the relationships between space, power, resistance, and culture, with a focus on how they have been used to socially control the nation and its identity.



Fig 2. A collage of old and contemporary buildings that are being scattered across the country. (Cassuende, 2022)

## KEY FINDINGS

- Unlike the strongly linked community of cine esplanadas, modern cinemas isolate themselves as a subset of a larger entity. As a result of this isolation, modern cinemas lack a sense of identity and ownership over the Angolan urban fabric.
- Open-air-cinemas evolved from a control medium and colonial symbol to a platform for resistance to colonial power.



Fig 7. Atmosphere in cine esplanadas (Cassuende, 2023).

## BACKGROUND



Fig 3. Patterns: repetition of forms/ shapes, structures ( columns, arch), colours, lines laid out in different arrangements are some elements of Angola's architectural identity. (Cassuende, 2023).

In the 1500s, Portugal colonised Reino de Angola and named it 'Portuguese Angola'. Until independence in 1975, architecture became a main form for the young Republic of Angola to express its national identity.

Similarly to most Sub-Saharan African countries, the coincident period of economic boom in Angola allowed for elaborate construction methods, while the tropical climate allowed for architecture that blended the inside and outside, focusing on form and the expression of materiality. At the same time, this architecture reflects the difficulties, contradictions, and dilemmas that the countries faced during their independence process.

Unsurprisingly Angola has its own unique urban fabric or identity, however, currently, these motifs or elements have lost their hierarchical position in the design priority specification and somehow disintegrated with modern methodologies. To an extent, that is acceptable for sustainable efficiency, health and safety reasons. One could argue the extent of amalgamation has not been exercised nor experimented enough resulting in a cultural loss of Angola's urban fabric.

"The concept has passed from that of a home for various types of show, which is open and integrated in public space, to a closed space, focused on the cinema and on mass consumption" (Hurst, et al., 2015).



Fig 4. Drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture are all considered a single language with many words and an infinite alphabet in Angolan architecture (Cassuende, 2023)

- Despite the control within the old open air cinemas, they were the spaces where the public felt most in control. This is because there was an unconscious identification of Angolan culture or authenticity through the motifs, which led to users feeling comfortable and the social buzz and energy to fill the space.

"laughter and jokes during film screenings were permitted, and now it is more silent and cold, everything is controlled, previously it was warmer, friendships were formed within these structures" (Moura, 2023) (fig 7 and 8).

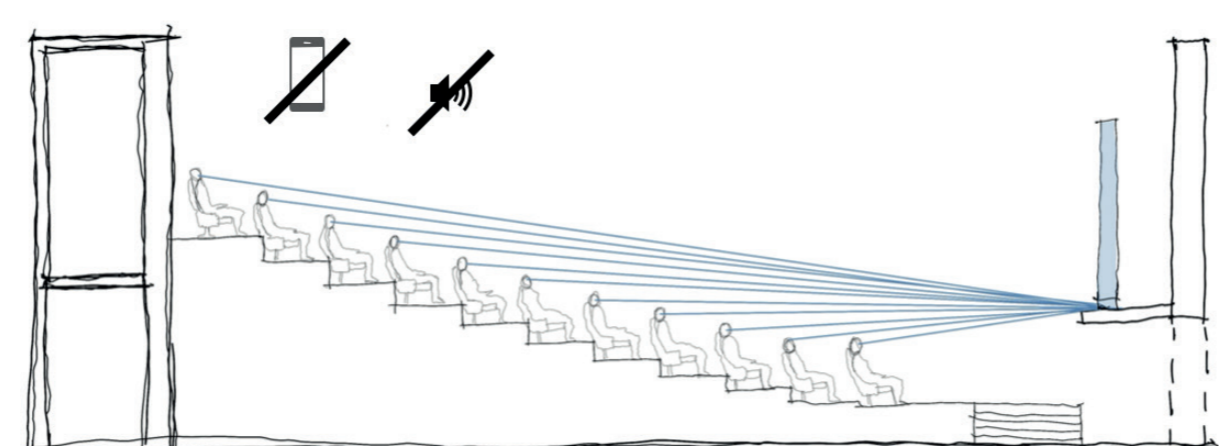


Fig 8. Atmosphere in modern cinemas (Cassuende, 2023).

## METHODOLOGY

- Used Cine Estúdio, an authentic cine esplanada or open-air- cinema, as inspiration to find and understand the authentic urban fabric of Angola.
- Used Zap Cinemas, a modern cinema integrated into a shopping mall, as unsuccessful example of inappropriately amalgamation, overpowering the modern influences at the cost of cultural loss.
- Conducted interviews with collaborators of Cine Estúdio and family members who had the unique experience of these cine-esplanadas, to provide first hand experience of the cultural practices and social customs that open air cinemas made possible.
- Used Fernandes's, *Angola Cinemas*, to help me critically assess the case studies to identify which aspects and components are authentic, modern, colonised, and amalgamated,.
- Used Herz's, *African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence*, which helped me understand Angola's modernisation process and the role of cinemas in accommodating this desire
- Used Zizek's ideology of colonial resistance to show how the morphology of cinemas can be reconstructed to allow users and modern designers to differentiate between modern architectural design and Angolan architectural design.



Fig 5. Zap Cinemas- one of Angola's newest cinemas - located on Shopping Avenida, Luanda (Promdesign.studio, 2016).

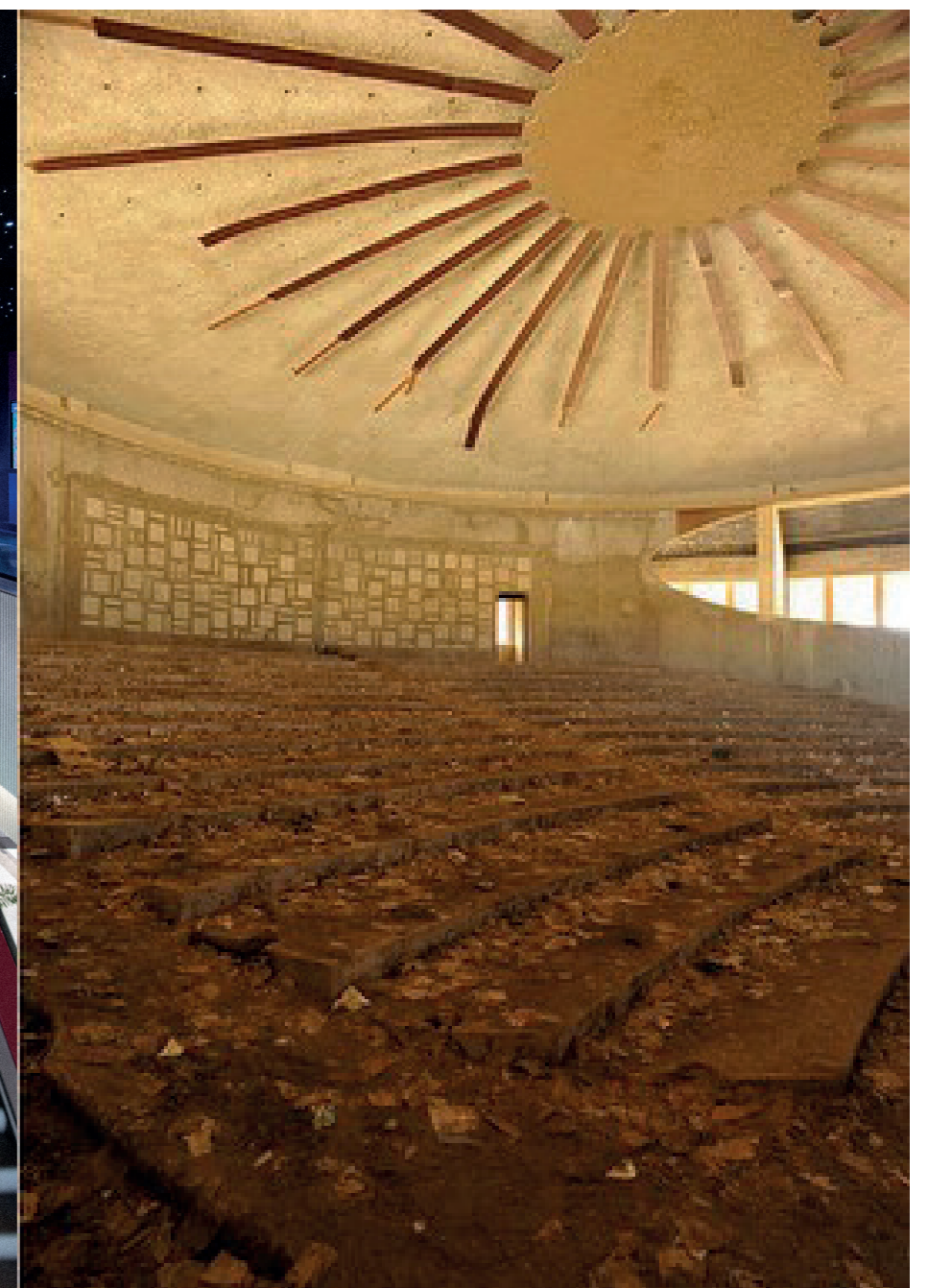


Fig 6. For years this was the state of Cine Estúdio (Njardim, 2019)

## CONCLUSION

One realises and fully comprehends that using modern techniques is critical for construction, sustainability, and efficiency. However, Cine Estúdio demonstrates how modern techniques can only be used to ensure the project's longevity while retaining the essence and cultural pastiche of Angola's authentic urban fabric.

As a result, modern designers are encouraged to retain from a heritage and cultural conservation perspective when creating Angolan cinemas - as it is a historical typological bypass, there is an unconscious responsibility that architects must follow. Having said that, the amalgamation strategy is used when modern techniques are used for building sustainability and longevity, while the design agenda is applying compositional aesthetic or spatial configurations that resemble or carry a similar essence to the authentic cultural identity of Angola.

### References

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 Fig 2. Cassuende, A. (2022) Old vs Modern [Collage]  
 Fig 3. Cassuende, A. (2023) Elements of Angolan Architecture[Collage]  
 Fig 4. Cassuende, A. (2023) Colour and patterns [Collage]  
 Fig 5. Promdesign.studio. (2016) ZAP Cinemas Shopping Avenida. Available at: [https://www.promdesign.studio/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ZapCinemas\\_02\\_1.jpg](https://www.promdesign.studio/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ZapCinemas_02_1.jpg) (Accessed 17 September 2022).  
 Fig 6. Njardim, M. (2019) O CINE INACABADO DE MOCÂMEDES. Available at: [https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-KTRMurtXjWw/WsBA7C\\_0o0I/AAAAAAAAqNM/V5X6yldiCX8Tto39fYhH3UBMq2xjw8VACLcBGAs/s1600/27750498\\_1977253528957951\\_7128750036636161182\\_n.jpg](https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-KTRMurtXjWw/WsBA7C_0o0I/AAAAAAAAqNM/V5X6yldiCX8Tto39fYhH3UBMq2xjw8VACLcBGAs/s1600/27750498_1977253528957951_7128750036636161182_n.jpg) (Accessed 17 September 2022).  
 Fig 7 & 8. Cassuende, A. (2023) Cine Estúdio atmosphere [ Sketch]