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A century-old German theater gets a facelift that seamlessly blends past and present.

When Stuttgart-based interior architect Alexander Fehre was approached to revive one of Germany's first cinema halls, located in Cottbus, he was asked to create a stunning space that at once honors the venue's past and heralds its future. The client didn't want another cold, corporate, big-box multiplex. Fehre, who founded his own studio in 2009 and was previously a senior designer at Ippolito Fleitz Group, came up with a seductive solution for the historic 15,600-square-foot structure. "I imagined going out of reality and into the cinema," he says, "to have details that really pull you into the experience of the evening." Those details include the foyer's carpeting from Ege Carpets, with a wave-shaped 3-D custom print by Fehre; a hypnotizing elliptical ceiling projection; and a CNC-cut oak wall inlay for a fire extinguisher. In the bathrooms, textile-covered electric cables by Swedish manufacturer Frinab create textured web-like ceiling patterns.

In collaboration with local firm Arcon, which coordinated the construction, Fehre built a space that "combines the historic with the modern in a way that's very self-evident and also playful and fun to experience," he says. "It's not as serious as a regular theater." Its framework, a wry mishmash of old and new, fuses together three disparate cinema halls. One of the two 80-seat auditoriums is black with an abstract LED zigzagging through its surfaces like a lightning bolt; the other is oak-paneled with blue seats and has an oculus-like projection room. In the two-story main space, there's a gold-paneled ceiling, wall textiles from manufacturer Nya Nordiska, parquet flooring, and 520 copper-colored seats, 340 of which are retractable. "In the modern age, we more or less have only cinemas in which the focus is taken off the room," Fehre says. Not so here. Bring up the house lights.—**Spencer Bailey**

