

# Theatrical Theaters

BY HARRIS ALLEN, A. I. A.



THE FACT that one is masked as a cathedral, another as a skyscraper, does not worry the owners of the two theaters which are here illustrated. It is not at all inappropriate. Huge illuminated signs proclaim that these buildings are not what they seem; that they are temples, not to creed or commerce, but to the worship of make-believe. They are advertisements for their own wares.

They express their function, then, though it may be in a paradoxical manner. And each, according to its own (bright) lights, is consistent in carrying out the vehicle of architectural stylisticness it has chosen for the wagon to which its stars are hitched.

The Carthay Circle Theater is extremely picturesque, both by day and by night, and its location, set in a sort of civic center, together with its color scheme of gleaming white accented by spots of brilliant tile, assures its receiving public attention without the necessity of overloading it with ornament. That would indeed be gilding the lily. However, there is quite enough vigorous Spanish detail to determine its character; and

the interior treatment has a similar spirit. Comparatively plain except for grouped spots of definitely Spanish ornament and a circular ceiling whose radiating, interlacing panels are approximately Mudejar, it relies principally on color and boldness of scale for its effect—and secures it.

Question its architectural morals if you will; but the fact remains that the building is undoubtedly a success as a solution of a given problem—a spectacular success; and carried out consistently and cleverly. And for all its theatrical posing, there is a certain effect of simplicity, even of sincerity about it—well, it is quite confusing, or to use the popular word of the hour, intriguing; and so, again, a success.

The United Artists Theater is a bird of a different feather; but it, too, has doubtless accomplished its object. Its terra-cotta embellishments outshine all its neighbors, its tower (euphemistically called a roof sign) rears proudly above all the surrounding tanks and pent-houses. Everyone knows it is there.

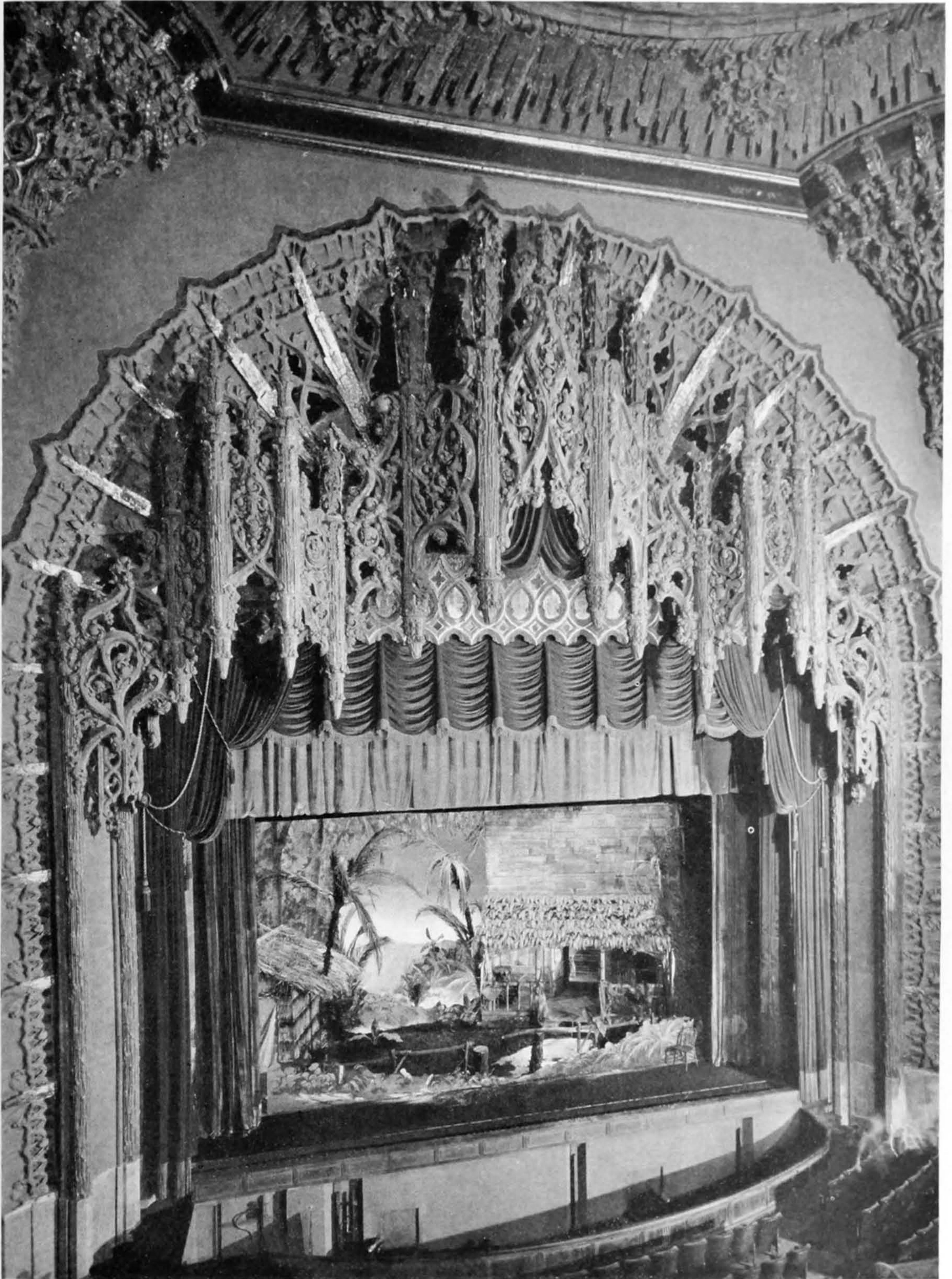
Continuing this supremacy over all rivals, there dawns upon the delighted but awed (I am sure they must be awed) movie fans a scene of truly regal magnificence when they enter these pulchritudinous portals, and with each step inward the setting is more and more gorgeously theatric until the Holy-of-Holies is reached, than which there could not possibly be anything which would not be an anti-climax. It is the grand finale, with all the brasses and strings and winds at their utmost fortissimo. Words cannot describe, pictures but faintly suggest, the orgy of ornament of groined vaults and crested canopies, of golden grillage, of splendid stenciling—and all hanging well together in a general consistency of treatment that might be called a Super-Spanish-Gothic—at any rate, it's simply (no, not simply, magnificently) swell, and the effect upon the public must be stunning—a regular K. O.

Therefore this, too, is a success as a required solution, a theater which is more of a theatrical stage setting than any scene which could be set back of its own proscenium arch, an advertising song without words. Who would be so rash as to overlook the skill and pains it took to produce this masterpiece of scenic decoration and deny that it is an achievement?

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United Artists Theater, Los Angeles, California.  
Walker and Eisen and C. Howard Crane, Architects.



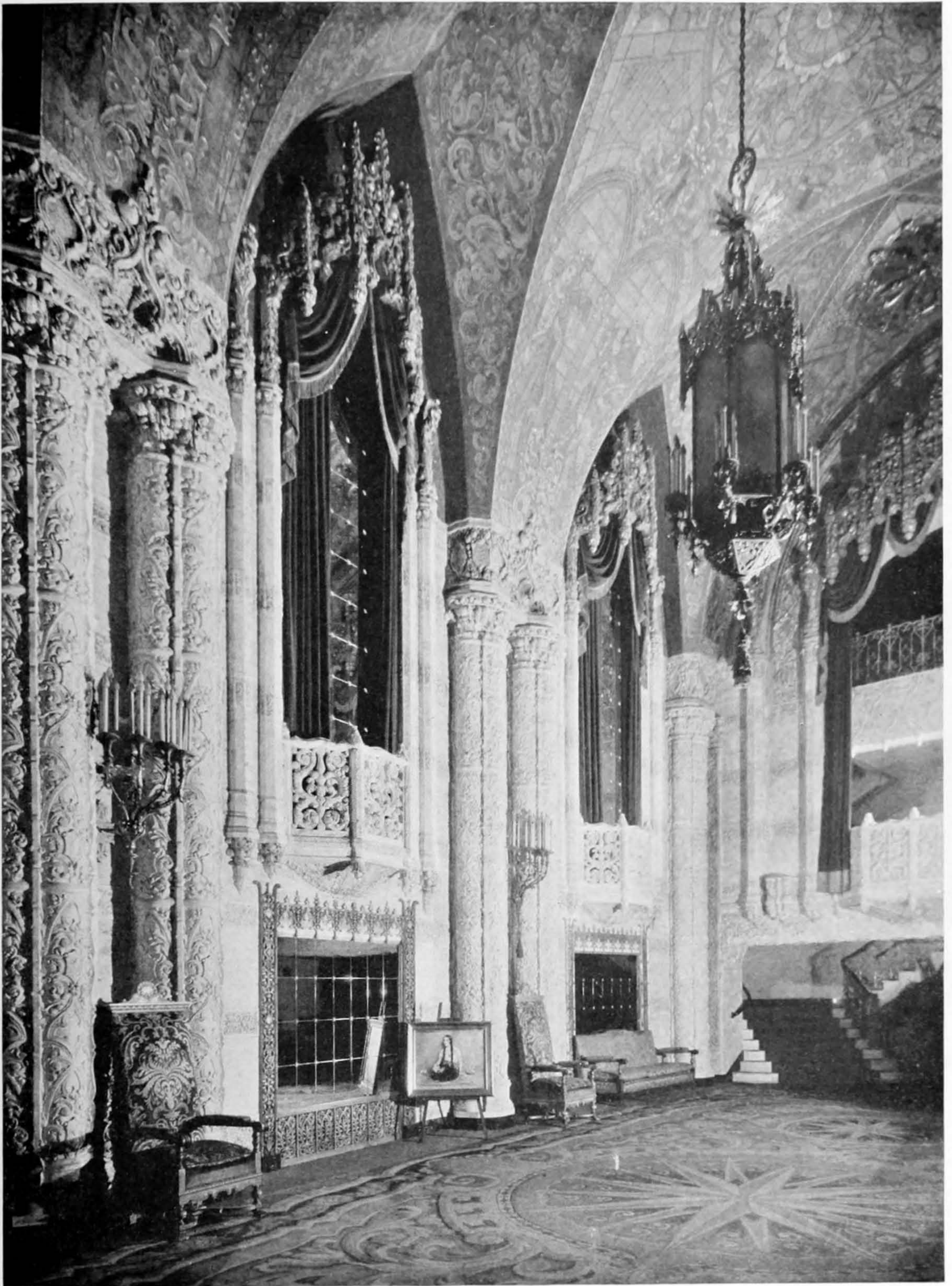
PROSCENIUM ARCH, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS.

*Photo by Mott Studios*



ORGAN SCREEN, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS.

*Photo by Mott Studios*



FOYER, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS.

*Photo by Mott Studios*



LOBBY, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS.

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