

OPINION

IIT remembers Robert Calvin.
Pg. 2

CAMPUS

Sustainability Week
Pg. 5

SPORTS

Athlete Spotlight:
Phil Theisen
Pg. 11

TUESDAY

October 18, 2011

Volume 171 | Issue 5

technewsiit.com

TechNews

Student newspaper of Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

Opinion 2

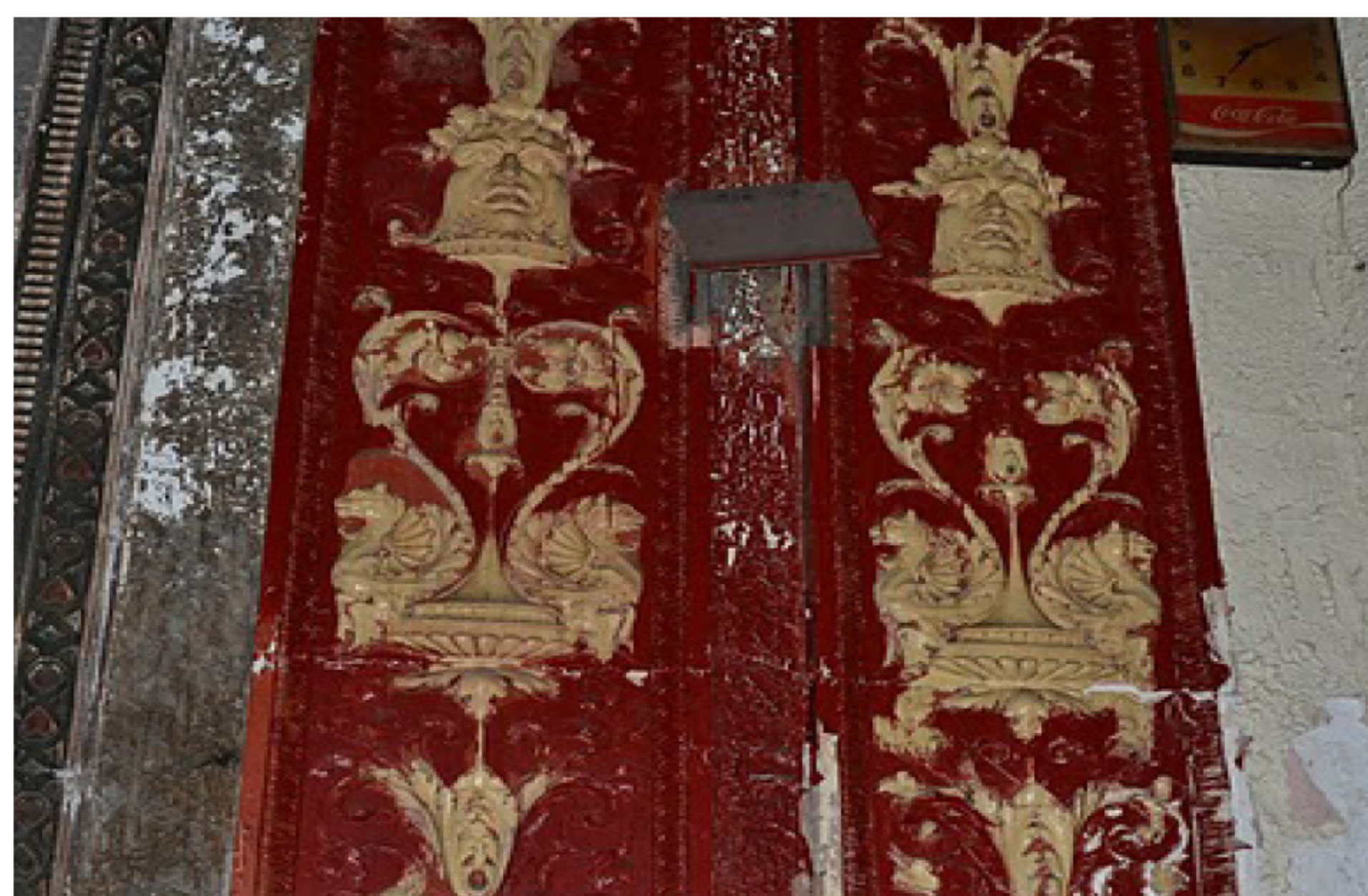
Campus 3-7

A&E 8

The Slipstick 9

Sports 10-11

'Ramovation' revitalizes historical Bridgeport



Photos courtesy of IPRO 364: Ramovation

By Kyle Pancham
TECHNEWS WRITER

Two weeks ago, IIT's IPRO 364 paid another visit to our neighbor, the Ramova Theater, at 3518 S. Halsted in Bridgeport. What could possibly motivate our IPRO team to visit a shuttered theater?

Simply put, the community is crying out for a massive restoration and rebirth of the Ramova in the very near future. The time has come to restore and reuse the Ramova Theater!

A brief history of the Ramova starts with its opening on August 18, 1929, in Bridgeport as a sister to the Music Box Theater at 3733 N. Southport. What makes the Ramova special is that it is a 1400-seat atmospheric theater, the largest in the area. One of the Ramova's highlights was showing "The Great Dictator," Charlie Chaplin's satirical film about Nazi Germany.

Unfortunately, the theater closed in 1986 and it has since sat vacant, accumulating water damage and the curiosity of many people over the last 25 years. This mysterious, shuttered theater has managed to

work its way into the hearts and minds of many of Bridgeport's past and present residents, from ages 8-80.

Some of these fans have banded together to form Save the Ramova (StR), which

was spearheaded by Maureen Sullivan and Rob Warmowski, in partnership with local residents. StR currently hosts 2700 fans on Facebook. Through work with StR, students in IPRO 364 have acquired a clearer understanding of the impact that restoring the Ramova would have on Bridgeport and the theater's sentimental value to the neighborhood, city, and greater theater community.

So, how and why did IPRO 364 begin? IPRO 364 is one of the first IPRO 2.0 classes to gain approval from the faculty and student body of IIT. The idea for a collaboration between IPRO and StR to restore the theater was originally suggested by Robert Chaney, a biomedical student at IIT. All of the classes for IPRO 364 have been led by Institute of Design Adjunct Professor Limia Shunia. IPRO 364 has evolved greatly over the past several semesters. IPRO 364 started in fall 2010 and continued into 2011.

During spring 2011, a massive effort to collect data about Bridgeport was undertaken by IPRO 364 to get a better understanding on what people and local businesses wanted in the renovation. The data gathered informed the students how the community would best use the renovated theater. In conjunction with the Bridgeport data collection, information was collected from other local college students to determine what types of programming they

would support at the theater. From surveying these groups, IPRO 364 was able to construct a better picture on what types of amenities and programming would be best for the Ramova. During summer 2011, IPRO 364 was able to create an energy map of power consumption by the Ramova, floor plans, and a final tally of the different amenities people want to see in the theater.

Getting back to the present, IPRO 364 entered the Ramova to obtain measurements, determine what features can be retained and re-used, and gain an overall sense of the theater's current condition.

Upon entering the theater, I was amazed by how intact it was. Sure, there were some water-damaged locations throughout, but I was more impressed with it being relatively intact.

The auditorium itself amazed me, purely because I have never been inside a vintage theater before. I was in awe at the size of the room and its overall layout. Sure, there were chairs missing, but that did not matter. What did matter was the fact that I was finally inside the heart and soul of the Ramova itself and in a way it impressed upon me the importance of seeing this theater renovated.

Overall, the trip itself was very helpful for me and other members of the IPRO. It was also very valuable to be accompanied by

preservationist Ray Shepardson, who is one of the most accomplished theater restoration experts in the United States. Ray Shepardson is also interested in the restoration of the Ramova and knows that its restoration will be a valuable asset for Chicagoland and the local theater community. Overall, I found the trip to be invaluable and know that it will be an experience I won't forget soon.

To wrap up, IPRO 364 has many goals to accomplish this semester. IPRO 364 will continue until at least next semester and maybe beyond that.

Over the course of this semester, we have taken a look at utilizing green technology in the Ramova to reduce its energy costs, as well as considered a closed loop design, how to re-use waste products, and reduce the overall amount of waste produced.

In addition to researching green technology, IPRO 364 has been able to build a better scope for meeting the Ramova's energy needs, organizing the theater to fit what our programming goals are, constructing a 3D model of the Ramova, and considering the building configuration to incorporate all of these concepts.

In closing, I feel as though, with the past three semesters of work on the project, we could be looking at the Ramova reopening in the near future, and for that I have high hopes.