

The Second Acts Of New York City's Old Movie Theaters

[Jill Comoletti](#)

Jul. 22, 2014, 3:06 PM



The Loews Valencia in Jamaica, Queens, opened in 1929 and was one of Loews' five flagship Wonder Theaters in the New York area. It is now operating as a church called the Tabernacle of Prayer for All People.

When you're shopping, working, or going to church in an old New York City building, there's a chance you might be standing in a former movie theater.

New York-based photographer [Larry Racioppo](#) created a portfolio of photos showing former movie theaters and what they have become. Racioppo grew up in Brooklyn and said he found it amazing that many of the theaters he'd known as a kid had escaped demolition. His photo portfolio is titled, "Movie Houses of the Outer Boroughs: Past Glory and Adaptive Reuse, 1998-2001."

This project was made possible by a grant Racioppo received from the Graham Foundation. He donated 105 photos from his project to the New York Public Library's Digital Collections, and hopes to someday show the entire project in an exhibit.

While many of the theaters are still standing, some have been demolished since Racioppo took these pictures.

Racioppo has been taking photographs since the 1970s. He loves capturing events in the New York area like the Mermaid Parade and Halloween—things that happen every year but change with time. "Everything I do is about New York," he said.

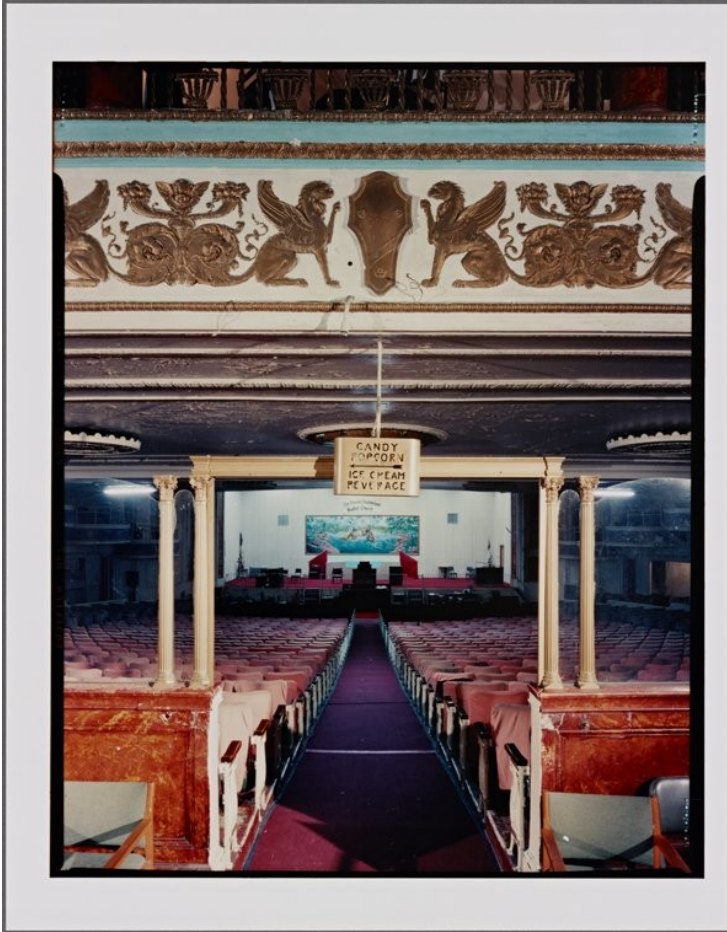
He is currently working on a book with investigative journalist Tom Robbins titled, "Before The Gold Rush," which will be about life in 1970s Brooklyn.

Here are some of the photos from "Movie Houses of the Outer Boroughs."

The 46th Street Theater in Brooklyn is still in use as a furniture store called Regal Furniture. The theater has quite a history—Racioppo said the Grateful Dead performed there back in the day.



The Savoy Theater in Brooklyn housed the Charity Neighborhood Baptist Church until 2012, but the building was unfortunately demolished earlier this year.



The former Drake Theater in Queens opened in 1935 and is now partially taken up by an Italian restaurant. However, 90% of the theater isn't being used.



You'd never know this C-Town supermarket in Brooklyn was formerly Prospect Theater, which opened in 1927.



The RKO Chester Theater opened in the Bronx in 1927. After it closed, it was used as a car repair garage. There was also a Spanish restaurant in the lobby for some time. The theater was demolished in 2010



The Palace Theater in north Bronx opened in 1948 and was eventually converted into a Bingo parlor. It is now a furniture store.



The Roland Theater in Brooklyn is now a church called the Holy House of Prayer for All People. Racioppo said the water tower on top of the building is a key sign that this structure was a theater, as many older theaters had this addition.



The former Colonial Theater in Bushwick, Brooklyn, is now the Wayside Baptist Church



The former Lowes Oriental Theater in Brooklyn is now a Marshall's, but the upper floors of the theater are untouched. Unfortunately, Racioppo could not get access to these floors



This building was once the Bronx Opera House, but it is now split up into several different parts, including a Spanish evangelical church. A boutique hotel was built and began using the front of the building as its entrance in 2013.

