Naked sculptures by Italian Dante Guidetti.

A building that is known to locals as Vision Theater still catches the fancy of many. First, its classical architecture stands out among the dilapidated buildings in the old downtown of Cebu City that were built years ago. Second are the nude sculptures that were executed by Dante Guidetti, an Italian sculptor who resided in Cebu, on a frieze that caps the topmost part of it.

A huge art-deco signage that once glowed with light bulbs is perhaps the only tell-tale sign that describes it as a theater. Many have been calling for the building’s complete rehabilitation. At present the building is occupied by hawkers selling pirated DVDs and other stuff. Only the facade too is visible as buildings have sprouted on both sides of it.
At four levels tall, one may ask how a theater and a multi-level building are compatible with each other. The answer perhaps can be found on a vintage newspaper advertising the building as a hotel with a bar and grill. This was in 1933. In later years, an extension that was totally incongruous with the architecture of the building was built at the back to accommodate a theater. And the building then became known as Vision Theater.

The hotel and the theater may have functioned at the same, or perhaps the building operated exclusively as a theater at this period. Different hands may have passed ownership of it. One never knows but another post-war vintage photo dated 1945 labels it now as Vision Theater. No mention whatsoever of the hotel nor were there any signage in the building that indicated it as such.

If ever the present owners have a desire to restore this rare gem in the old district of the city, I think it would be better off as a hotel again. The rooms can be spruced up and opened to tourists who want to explore this part of the city. Opening it back into a hotel will surely entice others to follow, not necessarily to convert their dilapidated buildings into hotels, but at least to restore them and render them a new life again.

Putting it back into use as a theater I think would not be feasible. There are already a number of theaters in downtown and most if not all of it are losing to the modern and cozy theaters of upscale shopping malls that the only way for them to survive is to lean on pornography.

The building as a hotel doesn’t necessarily have to be ultra-exclusive. If it can cater to budget travelers, then it will surely be a hit considering that it is just a distance away from the city’s usual historical attractions.

Ref.: http://cebuheritage.com/2011/03/07/a-vision-for-vision-theater/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TheHeritageOfCebu+%28The+Heritage+of+Cebu%29