

Playing Cinema

Interview with Indrė Mikelaitytė, Cinema Centre Romuva (Kaunas, Lithuania) by Anna Tatarska



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What was the intention behind launching “Playing Cinema”?

Recently, a trend has emerged that cinema audiences expect not only a movie screening, but also “added value” (presentations, tastings, music performances). Over the past year, we have organized many events where we combined film with various arts, sports, science, culinary, etc. Through surveys, we learnt that about 34% of such event visitors are first-time cinema-goers. It might be a key to reaching new, diverse audiences. For this project, we chose games because, among youth, board games and quizzes are very popular, plus there are various game-lover communities we could also attract. We want to test how many new visitors can become regulars. For the existing audience, these games will provide an opportunity to deepen their knowledge about cinema and will diversify the experience.

Can we dig into the details of this particular initiative?

The aim of “Playing cinema” is to help the viewer get to know European cinema in an interactive, understandable and accessible way. The project is organised by Kaunas Cinema Centre Romuva together with its Croatian partners Kino Gaj and Kino Valli. The initiative invites audiences to screenings of critically acclaimed, popular European films in all three theatres, as well as to participate in a series of quizzes. We’ve created educational cards for discussing films and the first board game about European cinema. It is an entirely



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new form of stimulating interest in European cinema and arthouse cinemas, and is an inclusive way to attract new audiences and build communities.

What makes your project stand out?

Film education, focused on a young audience, nurtures future viewers who are able to critically evaluate films. Understanding the film industry creates a sense of togetherness and a bond based on mutual respect that encourages more involvement and better understanding of its operating principles. The use of cards is universal - they can be applied to all movies. By using them, cinemas that do not yet have film education in place can easily offer a new activity.

What was the need for such an initiative in your country?

In the post-pandemic period, many European cinemas are facing lower attendances, and disengaged audiences that expect new experiences. A common problem is the lack

of fellowship, socialization, and communication. The game form enables every participant to meet at the cinema, take part in a quiz session, communicate, or take the movie experience home in the form of games. A new look at the cinema experience and education can meet the needs of the audience - to be together and to become part of the community of small cinemas.

What do you think its impact at a local and national level could be?

If cinemas want to remain relevant and attractive, we must look for unconventional solutions, unexpected, interdisciplinary collaborations. Games about cinema can offer a new, attractive way of talking about European film and culture. Both this practice and the games themselves will be developed and tested during our project.

What are your hopes for the project, what do you want to accomplish with it?

Audiences who get to know cinemas from different perspectives tend to become more involved in the activities of the cinemas in their city. This creates a sense of togetherness, mutual trust (spectator/player and cinema), and promotes greater audience involvement in cultural and community life. By talking openly about the challenges and difficulties that cinemas face, the audience can understand what cinema is, not merely as an institution, but also as a medium where common ground and humanity creates closer relationships.

Partner cinemas:

- Cinema Centre Romuva**, Kaunas, Lithuania (Coordinator)
- Kaunas Kino Gaj**, Varaždin, Croatia
- Kino Valli**, Pula, Croatia