

Arthouse Cinema Pass, Belgium

Interview with Frédéric Cornet, Cinéma Galeries

by Aurore Engelen

Could you please introduce the Cinéma Galeries in a few words?

Cinéma Galeries is an arthouse cinema with three screens. We mainly show festival films, focusing on arthouse, sometimes experimental work.

What about the Arthouse Cinema Pass, how would you present it?

The Arthouse Cinema Pass is a project between us and three other movie theatres in Brussels: Palace, Aventure, and Vendôme. We wanted to create a card that could be shared between the venues.

We had heard of the Cineville experience, as presented at the Europa Cinemas conference in Lisbon. Our purpose is to begin with Brussels, working with all the arthouse cinemas here, on an unlimited pass. We're starting with four theatres, but we're already in discussions with other venues. Next, we hope to expand to Flanders and Wallonia. In addition to the pass, we'll have a website and an app, where we'll publish reviews. We want to build a community.

We hope it will have the same effect as in the Netherlands, where it attracts younger audiences. Typically, our audience for arthouse films are 35 years old and over, but

we do expect to attract audiences between 18 and 30.

We don't actually have many cinemas in Brussels and Belgium. There are several neighbourhoods in Brussels where there are no screens. We think it might help for them to know that there's a film community. We need to map the possibilities in Brussels to have new screens as, in the Netherlands for example, they also opened new cinemas.

I should add that we are a very small country, where people tend to commute from one city to another, meaning they could go to the movies in Brussels as well as in Liège or Antwerp. That's another reason why we think the pass makes sense as a countrywide initiative, and will be adopted very quickly.

If we use the same technology as Cineville, people will even be able to go to the Netherlands, and attend the Rotterdam Film Festival, for example.

How will the pass work?

It's going to work as a monthly subscription, something around 20€/month, and the cardholder will be able to see as many films as they want, at any of the four participating cinemas in the first instance, and then for all member venues.



Cinema Palace, Brussels



Cinéma Galeries, Brussels

What was the need for it in Brussels, and in Belgium?

If I compare Belgium with France or the Netherlands, it seems that over there the relationship with cinema is much stronger, people tend to go to the movies to discover new films, even though they may have never heard of them. We need to find a way to offer something that will push our audiences to make more cinematographic discoveries.

With the Cineville pass in the Netherlands, they've had a 20% growth for arthouse films! In France, they have unlimited passes which are accepted in most theatres, so people become far more curious about new kinds of movies. That's what we want!

Do you think the monthly subscription is a good way to attract younger audiences, who are more used to this formula through their online consumption of culture, whether it's music, series or other content?

I think younger audiences have more time to spend on culture, and the pass will encourage curiosity. When you have a subscription, you feel like you don't pay. They feel they see the movie "for free".

Thanks to the diversity of cinemas, which will be part of the network, the audiences will have a wide range of movies to discover. We are mostly arthouse, but the Aventure has a more mainstream approach, with crossover programming, as does the Palace on occasion.

Every cinema will benefit from it. People will be able to see the new James Bond as well as the new Pedro Costa or Julia Ducournau with the same pass. The pass will create a link between our programming. I hope, in the coming months, we'll be able to convince other theatres, even the Cinématek, to join us.

Will the pass also include festivals?

Yes, I think festivals in Belgium could benefit from it for some screenings. That's how it works in the Netherlands. We want to offer special events to our community, including some premieres, and Q&As with directors. We'd like to do some outdoors screenings, too. We'll also work with film students to write about films for the website and the app. It's a whole package.

What will it change for you on a day-to-day basis?

We'll have a direct link with our audiences, they'll be able to book their tickets online with the card, and we'll also reserve some seats for our cardholders.

We'll launch a survey in a few days to know more about how people would like the pass to be, what kind of films they'd like to see, and which ones they'd like to see with subtitles—we'd like to address the very large expat community that exists in Brussels. We could plan a weekly meeting and screening with English subtitles, for example.

We'll have the results at the beginning of December, and we plan to launch the card in March–April at the latest.

Partner cinemas:

Cinéma Galeries (Brussels)
 Cinéma Aventure (Brussels)
 Palace (Brussels)
 Vendôme (Brussels)