



Café des Image, Hérouville Saint-Clair

In Extenso, France

Interview with Elise Mignot, Café des Images

by **Melanie Goodfellow**

Billed as a “sound factory capturing the life of cinema theatres across Europe”, In Extenso revolves around the creation of podcasts and other sound-based content inspired by the participating cinemas and their programmes. Elise Mignot, the director of the Café des Images cinema in Hérouville-Saint-Clair, a satellite city of the Normandy port of Caen, leads the project.

The other key partners include: Cinéma TNB, which is part of the National Theatre of Brittany (TNB) cultural complex in Rennes; Cinéma le Zola in Villeurbanne, the second-largest city in the metropolitan area of Lyon; and podcast studio Narrason.

Mignot talks about the origins and ambitions of the project.

Can you tell us a bit more about the project and its origins?

Even though we're called the Café des Images, we've been thinking about the question of sound for a while now and, in 2019, we started developing a project called Café des Sons (Café of Sounds) looking at different ways of working with sound in connection with cinema.

In the process, we connected with other cinemas that had also started working with sound and, specifically, podcasts. The Cinéma TNB, which, as part of the TNB, has access to production facilities, for example, started producing podcasts when cinemas were closed during

lockdown. We thought it would be great to work together, collectively, to delve into the question of sound in greater depth. We all intuitively felt that it could be an interesting way to connect people with cinemas.

Can you give some examples of the types of sound content you plan to create?

That's what we're figuring out now. When we submitted the project, we gave ourselves a wide brief that we're now in the process of defining. A key focus will be youth and the issues around which they are politically engaged. At the same time, we want each participant to produce

sound content that is pertinent to their theatre, so it will be very diverse.

Will the content be narrative or soundscape-based?
Mainly narrative.

A key element of the project is short residencies by sound artists in each of the participating cinemas. Can you explain the thinking behind this and how it will work?

Within the project, there is the idea that, as well as being a place of diffusion, cinemas can also be a place for the production of cultural content. Under the residencies plan, different sound artists will spend time in each of the participating theatres to create a one-off “feature-length” sound work that reflects the life of the cinema, in collaboration with Narrason. As well as generating a new piece of work, the residency week will also give us an opportunity to raise questions around sound with both our staff and audience.

Will you extend the project to other European partners outside of France?

The plan is that each of the participating cinemas in France will twin with another theatre in Europe on the project. For example, the Cinéma TNB holds the Travelling Film Festival every February where it focuses on a single city, and the city for 2022 will be Prague. The idea is that the residency will take place during this festival and that an exhibitor from Prague will also attend so they can integrate their cinema into the project.

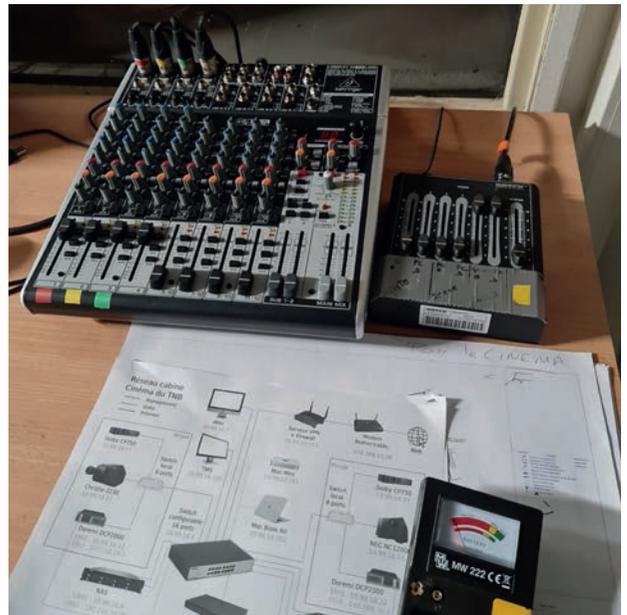
When do you plan to run the residencies at the Café des Images and Cinéma Le Zola?

In November for Cinéma Le Zola, to coincide with a short film festival that they have at the time, and for the Café des Images, it will be around end-January, early February.

What will you do with these podcasts and other forms of sound content?

The question of how we diffuse these podcasts and integrate sound content into our programmes is another key element of the project. We want to experiment with the idea of listening to sound content in a cinema theatre.

At the Café des Images, we have planned an event on November 26th around a preview screening of *Lamb*. We often show short films ahead of the main programme but this time we have experimented with short podcasts connected to the themes of animality and strangeness that are in the film. It is a test case and gives us an opportunity to see how it works and how the public reacts. We also have other ideas around making them available in our entrance hall on headphones via a system of QR codes.



Are there any other elements to the project?

The third phase is to create a kind of blueprint or template for creating podcasts. Our teams already do this using a very set format with Narrason, but it’s something we want to develop. The aim is for each of the three cinemas in the initial round of the project to create five podcast episodes, lasting five minutes each, to create a 15-episode series around the lives of our cinemas. We’d then like to be able to offer the opportunity to other cinemas in France and Europe to create podcasts for this series, giving them the benefit of our experiences and know-how.

These episodes could be about a wide range of topics from films to artists and actors, or even events in the participating cinemas. The editorial line will be quite wide but, at the same time, we want to touch on subjects that will connect with younger audiences in all their diversity and different types of political engagement, whether it be around ecology, feminism, or inclusion.

What are your hopes and expectations for this project?

That we will have really worked in close collaboration with our partners to deepen our understanding of sound and how we can use it to capture the lives of our cinemas and integrate that into the work that we do. A longer-term hope is that we will find a way to sustain these initiatives into the future.

Partner cinemas:

- Café des Images (Hérouville-Saint-Clair)
- Cinéma TNB (Rennes)
- Cinéma Le Zola (Villeurbanne)