



Interrail through Europa Cinemas, Spain

Interview with Barbara Fernández Vilariño,
Golem Madrid

by Jesus Silva Vilas

We caught up with Bárbara Fernández, project coordinator of Interrail through Europa Cinemas, an initiative that invites young audiences on a cinematic journey through European cinema, placing special attention on the theatres in the network.

How did the project come about?

We had a terrible year in 2020 when cinemas closed for the first time. The initial idea for the project comes from our need to get out and travel at this time. Young people and university students were unable to experience what we all dream about when we are studying: travelling, Interrailing, going on Erasmus... We realized there was a gap there; people have been watching films at home, but they could not travel. And what better way to attract this audience than with an Interrail of European cinema? That is basically how the idea came about.

Why did you decide to focus on young people?

When Europa Cinemas launched the Collaborate to Innovate call for projects, we understood that we all have the same problem in trying to reach younger generations. It is difficult to attract them to watch European cinema, but they are interested in travelling and visiting other countries, so we wanted to combine these two worlds. This project is a

real boost for us, creating a shared mission with other cinemas in the network.

Then we started thinking about what we need and how to better reach this audience. We intend to launch a strong social media campaign. We believe this will help us approach young people through their own channels.

Ultimately, it is a very well-rounded project: we will meet our needs when it comes to connecting with this demographic. That is our main goal, to present European cinema as something appealing to them. And I believe that this is also a great opportunity to create a network with other players on a national and international level.

How will it work in practice?

It is simple: we organize a programme of European cinema that will be hosted in different theatres. We are working with various European institutions, educational bodies, and the embassies of several countries, to present these European territories in our cinemas. Not only through film, but also

through the actual theatres located in these places. When the audience arrives at the screenings, the host country and cinema introducing the films will be the theatre staff. They will give first-hand information on the particularities of their cinemas and the cultural diversity of their cities through a video or live connection, which will be broadcast in all partner cinemas (Golem Yamaguchi, Golem Alhóndiga, Van Golem Arlanzón, Van Dyck, Van Gogh, Cines Principe and Cines Siete Infantes).

For the first time, different Spanish cinemas are partnering up for a joint film series, while involving international exhibitors from the Europa Cinemas network. This year, the series will be comprised of 8 films. These will represent the different stops on the journey, which will take us through 8 cities with 8 selected theatres. We also want these stops to generate a sort of community, so people will want to come back for the next trip. The programming work is huge because we are selecting films together with all the participating cinemas and negotiating with the distributors.

What could be the impact at a national and international level?

This year will be our starting point, but I think the project can really last into the future. We can expand into other territories, both national and international. Our ideal would be to have continuity, in time. Just as we are exporting the idea to other European cinemas in the network, next year, others could take over, and we could be the ones showing our cities and theatres.

Currently, we are hoping to generate a network with several agencies and organizations to expand as far as we can. We want to work with Erasmus, with schools, and other educational centres, so that they understand the importance

of European cinema for education. Not only through films that deal with historical subjects, but also when it comes to showing the cultural diversity of these places. We are promoting a variety of synergies to emphasize value in the films and also the venues.

On a personal note, what are the short-term expectations?

We are experiencing a difficult time for film exhibition. When it comes to the young audience, we are basically starting from scratch. Any attendance will be very positive. Any feedback we receive from the youngsters will be essential for us. It is crucial that they return to the theatres to watch more European cinema. Having even half of the seats occupied in the screenings would be wonderful. Of course, we count on our regular audience to show up, but we really want to reach the younger demographics, too. Luckily, with digitisation, we can measure audiences far more precisely. I'm confident that next year we will have more stops on the way and that we can create a community of young people interested in European cinema and culture.

Partner cinemas:
Golem Madrid (Madrid)
Golem Yamaguchi (Pamplona)
Golem Alhóndiga (Bilbao)
Van Golem Arlanzón (Burgos)
Van Dyck (Salamanca)
Van Gogh (León)
Cines Principe (San Sebastián)
Cines Siete Infantes (Logroño)

