

EUROPA CINEMAS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION LAB

“Reflect, create, adapt & connect: DIY ways to renew your offer”

Bologna, 24 – 28 June 2023

Final Report

In 2023, Europa Cinemas five days Innovation Lab was held as part of Bologna “Il Cinema Ritrovato” Festival (Italy) once again on location from 24 to 28 June 2023.

Europa Cinemas Bologna Innovation Lab was led by **Madeleine Probst** (Executive Producer, Watershed, UK) together with **Bob van der Meer** (General Manager, Filmhallen-The Movies-FilmKoepel, Netherlands).

41 cinema exhibitors from 19 countries gathered during the Cinema Ritrovato Film Festival. Network members and European exhibitors came to the Cineteca di Bologna to discuss issues and share ideas and key learnings around the topic “**Reflect, create, adapt & connect: DIY ways to renew your offer**”.

BOLOGNA, DAY 1 – Reflect, Create, Adapt & Connect



The first day was the kick off of the Bologna Innovation Lab. 41 cinema exhibitors from 19 countries were welcomed by the freshly appointed CEO of Europa Cinemas; Fatima Djoumer, Elisa Giovannelli (Cineteca di Bologna) and the lab leaders Bob van der Meer (Filmhallen Amsterdam) and Madeleine Probst (Watershed Bristol).

Fatima, who has been working at Europa Cinemas for over 28 years, said the first ever Innovation Lab was hosted in Bologna and that this lab is meant to exchange ideas between participants, but also to reflect on what exhibitors do on a daily basis and adapt to the always changing situation. The goal is to inspire every participants, to make them meet each other and to get inspired to work together. She calls on the participants to take a look at the different projects funded by Europa Cinemas, such as Collaborate to Innovate and Next/Change projects. She also announced that in 2024 there will be more funding available and there will be bootcamps launched, to strengthen Europa Cinemas members' training.

Gian Luca Farinelli (Cineteca di Bologna) welcomed this years participants with optimistic words, reminding that cinemas are the essence of Il Cinema Ritrovato festival, as people love seeing films in the cinema. He said that in the future, cinemas will thrive and still exist years from now, although it will be their task to find ways to keep the dialogue going between them and the public and thus find ways to surprise their audience. He went on to state that in the 37 years of this festival, the audience had not been this young ever. The average age of visitors were 20 years old.

Bob van der Meer and Madeleine Probst also welcomed the participants and urged everyone to feel comfortable to share and be active. They asked the exhibitors to switch off from the office and be present during the lab, as trying to connect can lead to beautiful things.



After an introduction of the team, participants were asked to quickly introduce themselves and presents one thing they are very proud of and one of their biggest challenges. Everything from events, to marketin , programing, volunteer systems and the physical space has been presented. Those presentations gave the opportunity to better understand the needs and the point of interests of each participants.



This session kicked off with Marvin Wiechert (Marketing manager MUBI) who shared his insights on how to reach new audiences through digital marketing.

The plus of digital marketing as opposed to traditional, offline marketing, is that it gives us detailed data, which makes it measurable. The downside is that we are dependent on these major platforms and that digital marketing is constantly changing. We have to keep on analysing and adapting to these changes. His advice to the participants is to do a platform analysis to see what fits your cinema and wishes, but one thing that is certain is try to be engaging and appealing to your potential followers. Do not bombard them with one sided posts, but really think about their wishes.

Julian Staartjes (Filmhallen) gives a presentation on how you can get to know your audience through digital marketing. Their main marketing tool is their website and their goal is to make people who pass by, returning visitors and in the end; ambassadors. Through collecting data you can really get to know your audience and this way, you can start building fitting campaigns for different audiences. Two examples of their campaigns are upselling Cineville memberships and crossselling special programming.

Anne-Laure Louvet (Cinema Galleries) shares their insights on creating and sharing to build audience loyalty. One of the ways they do this is choosing one visual for their specials and adapt this visual in different formats, such as posters, flyers and totes, but also sharing photos of certain events. This ensures a certain recognizability towards your audience.

Milan Simanek (Kino Art) shares his view on how to reach your audience. Instagram has proven to be a good tool for them, especially because they show their employees in these images. They have said farewell to printed communication forms, even the older generation know how to use the internet to

find the programming. Their trying ways of making their website more user friendly, but communicating the possibilities of their website to the audience is sometimes a struggle. They try to reach new audiences by creating different kind of events, such as scoring silent movies by DJ's.



Marvin Wiechert joined again to tell us on how to reach out to new audiences through subscription models and memberships. Direct marketing is an easy tool to use and the plus is that people have to sign up for it themselves. And if you have this data there are ways to do targeted promo. The most basic form of direct marketing is your newsletter. He advised the participants to just find out what works for you, starting with emails first and later thinking of different kind of memberships. All you need to get started is an email address/ phone number and to have people log in on your website. This way you can start to track them.

After this presentation, the participants were divided into 8 groups and given the task to present ways to launch an audience building initiative. In these presentations a number of examples were presented on how to attract these groups: from young audiences, to refugees. There were also film festivals hosted by and for high school students, or even how you can attract older and younger generations together in mash-up programs. In addition, there were ideas on how you can host creative workshops for kids and host film screenings especially for older generations who might feel lonely and excluded from certain social gatherings.



After the lunch, a group of youngsters aged between 16 and 20 years of age spoke about their CR Young project together with the Cineteca. These youngsters are interested in working in the cinema industry later on in their careers and have found a way to learn from the Cineteca's know how and create their own ways to reach a young audience: they make video introductions, create marketing tools and even host screenings and do interviews.

Züleyha Azman (KINO Rotterdam) presented a case study on the creative marketing tools they produce in their cinema to promote their special programming. They make their own trailers, but also find new ways to promote their events. It's important that your venue has to live and breathe a certain special; for their Wes Anderson special they've hosted a dress up party, introduced a special burger in their restaurant, a new cocktail which can be ordered at the bar and have made a Wes Anderson style video with their own colleagues.

Laurent Callonnec (Cinéma L'Ecran) spoke about his project to create new networks in order to introduce new members to the cinema. These are people from different areas, from theatres, universities and bookshops. What do they need from you cinema and how can they use your space to host events to create a certain brand loyalty.

Marlena Gabryzewska (Stowarzyszenie Kin Studyjnych) shared their experience on creating an online VOD platform during the pandemic in three weeks time, especially for arthouse films. They created a trailer to promote it and through this platform they created a feeling of community in a time it was really necessary. By subscribing to this platform viewers supported their favorite cinemas. They had 62.000 subscribers and the platform is still online. They work together with different festivals and it is a way to host certain masterclasses on directors whose newest films can be seen in the cinema.

Gian Luca Farinelli ended this insightful day with presenting the developments of the underground cinema Modernissimo which is due to open in November 2023. A place which is intended to celebrate the history of cinema and will have a museum, café and of course a screening room. A place where different types of audiences can sink into 130 years of cinema history.

This day ended with the eight groups adding post-it on the white board with things they would like to take back from this session and challenges they face when they go back.

BOLOGNA, DAY 3 – Programming, Curation & Eventization



Day three of the Bologna Lab started with a presentation on curatorship and discovery: the role of films of the past in the future of cinema. The first presentation was by director of Carlotta France, Vincent Paul-Boncour. He shared marketing and promotional activities on the re-release of Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides*; the idea is to bring it to a new audience, but also bring people who've seen it in 1999, back to the cinema again. He presented a brand new poster and merchandise they've launched.

Vejune Dudeniene (Skalvijos Kino Centras) presented different inspiring activities they host to get their audience to come watch classics. They organise classics with introductions, serve fitting drinks at some of the screenings, host parties, ask other parties to serve food to make it a whole event, and also ask graphic designers to make posters for the specials.

Valentina Masper (Lo schermo bianco) spoke about their cinema that closed in 1978 reopened again in 2021. They are a home for classics and even have 35mm screenings. The film *Kings of the Road* by Wim Wenders, which was the closing film back in 1978, was the film they screened in 2021. In their promotion, they went back to the past, by using an old video which was filmed in the 70's.

These presentations were followed by a mini workshop in which the participants were asked to organize an event around the film *Spellbound*, which they saw two days ago. A lot of the groups suggested to host an event around mental health awareness, in which this film was a part of. Another group choose a program on women's day and have introductions with a female perspective, followed by discussions. A few other groups choose to host events from a Freudian perspective and team up with professionals and universities to reach a wider audience. One group even went as far to organize art exhibitions around this subject inside the cinema and outside.

The second round of presentations were on finding a balance between regular and niche programming and event based programming. Franco Savelli (Cinemaincentro) kicked off and told about how they were struggling to get the audience back after covid. Every event seemed to be a one-night stand, people came to one screening, but did not come back and they had to start all over again. A few things they did was serialize events for a whole season, create a brand with one graphic design.



Zlatko Vidackovic (Metroplis, Croatia) spoke about their summer event in which they sell one ticket to attract an audience for all the different types of events they host in the one building. People can go to a concert, film, theatre and the cinema with one ticket. So, sort of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and this way you bring art to a wider audience.

Eva van Hessche (Cinema Storck) was the third speaker and spoke about how they try and create added value to experiencing a film screening together. They organize Flemish premieres in order to create buzz around a title, an Open Cinema Day and an event called Meet the Masters in which they invite film professionals to discuss one director and his/her films.

Baris Azman (screenwriter & director) displayed his trailers he makes for KINO Rotterdam and other cinemas & festivals. He told about his creative process, and the different types of trailers. Some of

them are based around a theme, others on directors/actors. For KINO he also created a documentary on photos they discovered at the Ducth Photography Museum on the set of Apocalypse Now, which premiered at Il Cinema Ritrovato in 2019.



After lunch it was time for a few Collaborate to Innovate projects backed by Europa Cinemas. Martin Kitzberger (Kinoabo) explained how they introduced monthly subscription with which cardholders can go to 18 cinemas in Austria. This is based on the Cineville pass which has already proved to be a success in The Netherlands and recently in Belgium.

Oskar Kobar (Taru Elektrikteater) had another inspiring story about how they created a management and ticketing software from scratch(!) and implementing it at 7 cinemas in Lithuania. A few challenges were that all cinemas have similar problems, but have different ways of dealing with these. But his advice is to keep it simple.

Silvia Ortolani (Cinema Solaris) presented their "Move the Movie" project with 4 cinemas in which they bring children to the cinema. Two of these cinemas had not worked with children before. These were screenings with a guide explaining the film. After the screening, the kids made drawings and there were winners picked by a jury. The 15 winners were lucky enough to see their drawings be made into an animation.

During the mini workshop, participants were asked to organize a collaborative project together. Interesting projects were mentioned; cinemas unite to screen films from first time directors, a platform that unites cinemas films that don't have a distributor can seen in different territories. But also, collaboration in sustainability was mentioned; cinemas can work together in buying equipment together so that you can share the costs. "Movies and music" was also a project, 4/5 cinemas in

different countries can team up and choose a silent film and ask an artist to create a soundtrack for it, so that it can tour different countries.

BOLOGNA, DAY 4 – Sustainability, Access & Inclusion



Day four of the Bologna Lab was about sustainability, access and inclusion. Bob van der Meer (Filmhallen, The Movies) started the day with a presentation on the renovation of The Movies through crowdfunding. After more than a 100 years it was time to renovate the cinema, the building started to dilapidate and something had to be done to be more sustainable, since the energy costs were going through the roof. They started a crowdfunding campaign and raised more than €90.000 in one week.

Hedvika Maternova (Bio Oko) told about how their cinema is almost like a living room for their neighbors. They want to be a place for everybody and thus create programming for seniors, people with babies, dogs and try their best to be an accessible space. They try to think about sustainability by introducing reusable cups, turning banners into totes and poster material into diaries.

Steph Read (Watershed) presented a few projects in their cinema regarding inclusion and sustainability; the box office area was renovated in order to make it more welcoming. Toilets were refurbished to make them more inclusive. They also try to reach a broader audience with more music events.

Sophia Zagoul (Admiral Kino) presented their projects on rethinking the physical cinema space in order to be more accessible, sustainable and inclusive. It is proven to be challenging to find a balance, because certain changes can also upset your visitors. They have turned parking spaces in front of the

cinema in a green outdoor area and have introduced inclusive initiatives such as more feminist cinema and senior screenings.



Yang Yang (Broadway Cinematheque Beijing) went on to tell about their cinemas in Mainland China. It is a big, multifunctional space with screening rooms, but also an exhibition space. She has also given insights on how they showcase foreign films in China, as you have to ask permission to screen these titles at the censorship. They only get to screen these films 2-3 times per city and they have to ask permission for every city separately.

After these presentations the participants were grouped together to think about ways how to reorganize your space. Bio Oko has the problem of keeping their energy costs low. An idea was to introduce a crowdfunding campaign and financial help from Europa Cinemas to reconstruct certain parts of the building. One cinema situated in a church without a bar area was very happy, because they came up with a solution during the workshop: create an area to socialize in between the cinema and church, right in the courtyard area. Another cinema was advised to make their space more atmospheric by adding tapestry, filters on lights and adding some plants in the multiplex cinema where they screen their films.



After lunch, Madeleine Probst went on to tell what they did to grow in a more sustainable way. It was time to be more reflective. They trained their staff during covid times, and asked themselves; does our organisation represent our city? It is a slow and complex process but you have to change things from the inside out. Ask other parties to organise and host certain events, this is the way for audience development.

Linda Sjögren (Hagabion) went on to tell about how their cinema is run by more than 120 volunteers; from box office to projection and programming to social media. They collaborate with different partners, for instance they have three cine clubs and host open movie nights, in which young directors can screen their films.



Hajna Toth (Budapest Film) told about the challenges they face after the pandemic. It has proven difficult to find staff who want to work in their cinema, since the pay is very low. Energy costs are going through the roof, which resulted in closing some of their cinemas on Monday's and Tuesday's.

The last workshop of the day is on thinking of ways to diversify your team. Different ideas were presented; it is all about starting small. Bring people in from outside your organization. If the board consists of mostly old white males, bring in an extra person on the board. You can appoint a diversity manager, find ambassadors and give them the space in your cinema. If you do not have a lot of young volunteers, find out where you can advertise so that you can reach them too. In the end, representation matters, because it pays off. If you want to create a safe space for minorities, you will need minorities in your team and audience.mai