

# Project Viridiana, Spain

## Interview with Silvino Puig, Cines Lys

by Jesus Silva Vilas

**Silvino Puig, coordinator of “Project Viridiana”, walked us through the particularities of their initiative, aimed at strengthening the presence of European cinema across the country through a series of film screenings broadcast simultaneously in partner cinemas.**

### **How did the idea for Viridiana come about?**

When cinemas closed, in March 2020, some colleagues and I started a series of weekly meetings, simply to support each other in difficult times. Before lockdown, we were already running a film club in our theatre, but we decided to move it online, to stay in contact with our audience during this period. We made it transferable to the other cinemas in the group and convinced renowned filmmakers to join us once a week. It was a beautiful experience because it allowed us to stay in touch with people that love cinema.

After lockdown, we continued with these meetings and added more cinemas to the network. When we restarted physical screenings of our film club, we continued to invite directors to join us after the films, or at least remotely. It was something that really enhanced the experience, and we noticed an increase in attendance. Meanwhile, the invitation to submit a project for the Collaborate to Innovate support scheme arose. After analysing the situation and reflecting on the experience we had during lockdown, we found a way to bring European cinema to places it doesn't usually reach.

### **How will it work? What are the main goals?**

We intend to organize one or two screenings a month, with directors present. A total of 13 sessions during the first year, each one hosted by a theatre in a different town. Both the screenings and the Q&As will be broadcast in all the network cinemas, which consists currently of 26 venues. We will agree on a date and a specific time that's suitable for everyone, working with distributors to bring talent to the theatres.

The aim of the project is to bring visibility to European cinema in places it doesn't have an audience, but we would also like to find new talent along the way. We want filmmakers to remember Viridiana as one of the projects that helped them become well-known, both in Spain and in other territories. The goal is to increase the overall presence of European cinema.

### **How is the programming going? Which films will be part of the project?**

We started in Barcelona with the latest film by Benito Zambrano, *Lemon and Poppy Seed Cake*. There is a selection committee with people from different theatres, and we are now working to secure more titles. I think most of the work will be in finding new voices. We'll make every effort to make distributors feel comfortable, but we know it will be a tough start.

We must collaborate with distributors so that they can offer us the product, and always accompanied by talents. They must be willing to visit places like Utrera, Palencia, Palma de Mallorca, or Valencia. That is our milestone to achieve. We are flexible, and will adapt to the schedules of the filmmakers. This programme could strengthen European cinema in our theatres, while sharing the risks.

### **When dealing with such a widespread network, what will be the communication and marketing strategy to promote the project?**

We have hired a communication agency to manage the social media and website for the project, which is already operational. On top of that, there will be some internal work for each cinema, which may require further investment of time and money. The communication of Viridiana will focus on general information, but it is up to each cinema to contact their local media and encourage their audience. Moreover, if this is not the kind of cinema they usually show on their screens, then the theatres must commit to giving some continuity to those films they are premiering. It doesn't make sense to host a screening of a film if it won't stay on screen afterwards. We must support European cinema for it to take root in these venues.

### **What are your expectations? What kind of impact do you expect to have?**

We are very excited, but we also know that it will be difficult. We are professionals with great experience in the sector, but entirely new in this field. At the end of the day, we want people to identify with the Viridiana brand, and come to watch the films trusting the project because they had a good experience with previous films. We don't care



Silvino Puig Boltés, Benito Zambrano, Rogelio Delgado

if there are only a few people in the room, as long as they come back to the cinemas.

We think the project should continue in the long term. This year there might be some mistakes, but we want to learn from them and keep growing. If something doesn't work as expected, we won't understand it as a failure. The intention is to get things rolling this year, convincing distributors to believe in the project. The aim is that it will become established and sustainable in the future, ideally without any external support.



- Partner cinemas:**
- Cines Lys (Valencia)
  - Multicines 7 (Bilbao)
  - Florida (Vitoria)
  - Centrofama (Murcia)
  - Multicines El Centro. Cineapolis Cadiz (Cadiz)
  - Cines Babel (Valencia)
  - Augusta Af. (Palma)
  - Cines Princesa (Madrid)
  - Renoir Plaza España (Madrid)
  - Renoir Retiro (Madrid)
  - Renoir Floridablanca (Barcelona)
  - Cines Broadway (Valladolid)
  - Cines Manhattan (Valladolid)
  - Getxo Zinemak (Getxo)
  - Cine Zugaza (Durango)
  - Multicines La Laguna (La Laguna)
  - Cineapolis Dos Hermanas (Sevilla)
  - Cineapolis Utrera (Utrera - Sevilla)
  - Cinemundo-Cineapolis Huesca (Huesca)
  - Rívoli Aficine (Palma)
  - Multicines Guadalajara (Guadalajara)
  - Multicines Avenida (Palencia)
  - Mk2 Palacio De Madrid (Madrid)
  - Mk2 Cine Paz (Madrid)
  - Mk2 Cinesur Nervión (Sevilla)
  - Mk2 Cinesur El Tablero (Córdoba)