

CINEMA ARCHITECTURE WITH TWISTS AND TURNS, PODS AND PEDALS

Cool Designs

by Andreas Fuchs

Filmai, atrinkti rankomis ir sirdimi” is Lithuanian for “films, selected with hands and heart,” according to the translation offered by Ruta Boguzaitė, director of the Cinema Pasaka in Vilnius.

But feet can play a role too. Opened in April 2009 in the old town section of the Baltic nation’s capital (www.kinopasaka.lt), the two-screen art house with an additional “small but cozy video hall” has screenings in which the power that runs the projector comes from rigged-up stationary bicycles. The pedaling is done by volunteers who spin the generator-

connected wheels in shifts of eight people at a time. Audience members are invited to join in during “Velokinas.” For visual details, check out a video produced by Current TV (<http://bit.ly/1010cool1>) and subsequently annotated by Reuters (<http://bit.ly/1010cool2>).

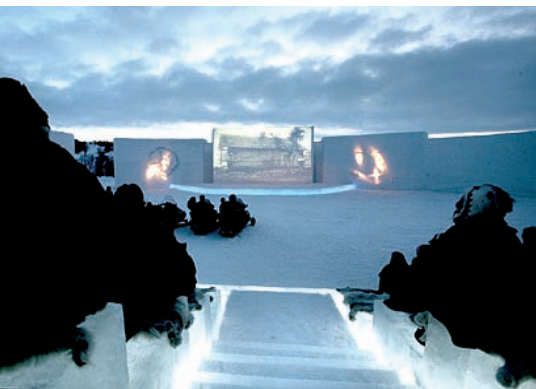
“We are bike enthusiasts and we love good movies,” Jonas Dovydenas of the Velokinas organizing committee says in the report. “Also, we want to promote an eco-friendly lifestyle. We have decided bicycles can be used beyond the outdoors and it is possible to ride them inside a cinema to generate electricity, which is used to project the films.”

It takes about 30 minutes to hook everything up, so “in between showings all the gadgets and necessary gear remain at the cinema, but not in front of

the screen,” Boguzaitė explains to *FJI*. “The idea became a reality this winter. Velokinas was one of our first and bigger projects and we plan to stick with it.”

During the summer, Cinema Pasaka hosted outdoor screenings and brought the power bikes to the historic town square, too. “So now people are pedaling in front of our 16 x 8 meter screen [52 x 26 feet] in the fresh air, which feels even better. When we finish the open-air screenings, Velokinas will come back to the cinema during a documentary festival in October.” Appropriately enough, the series will feature an ecology theme.

Requiring much less footwork, just pressing the brake or gas pedal, the Sámi International Film Festival (<http://bit.ly/1010samifest>) in Guovdageaidnu,



NORWAY'S SÁMI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FEATURES THE ISBIO “ICE CINEMA,” WITH PARKING FOR ICE SCOOTERS AND REINDEER SLEDS.

LITHUANIA'S CINEMA PASAKA'S “VIDEO HALL” REQUIRES VOLUNTEERS TO PEDAL POWER THE FILM PROJECTOR.





NL ARCHITECTS

Norway, offers drive-in spaces for snowmobiles and ice scooters, “but there are also seats available for other audiences.” Also welcome at the Isbio “ice cinema” are reindeer sleds, though admission charges listed on the ticketing site are NOK100 (US\$16.25) or “a reindeer hide.” The invitation also recommends, “Bring warm clothing or sleeping bag to keep warm.” That certainly sounds like good advice for a region that lies largely north of the Arctic Circle.

Every March for the past 14 years, the Festival presents the works of Sámi filmmakers—perhaps the best-known example is Nils Gaup’s *Pathfinder*—and other native peoples from around the world. “There is an adage often used in indigenous film: ‘Take back our stories,’” festival director Håkon Isak Vars writes in his welcome. “To us, this means that Sámis themselves should make their own films to bring a Sámi point of view. We are on our way there.”

The cool Isbio, with its adjoining ice bar serving “vodka, whiskey, cognac... in ice glasses,” has been part of that route for the past ten years. “To keep the projectors warm and dry—we usually use digital video, but we have also screened



PLESKOWRAEL ARCHITECTURE

HOLLAND’S MULTI MILL PROJECT WOULD INCORPORATE CINEMA INTO A WATER-FRONT CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT SPACE ON THE PORT OF AMSTERDAM.

CALIFORNIA-BASED PLESKOWRAEL ARCHITECTURE HAS PROPOSED A ROOF-TOP LOUNGE AND BAR WITH AN OUTDOOR MOVIE SCREEN.

THE FLIX BREWHOUSE IN RED ROCK, TEXAS, ANTICIPATES ITS DEBUT IN 2011.



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on 35mm—we build a special room,” Vars tells us. From stadium rakes for some 150 guests to stage and screen, the cinema “is different from year to year, and a piece of architecture that only lives a few months,” he elaborates. “Our screen is made of pure snow and ice from the Kautokeino River, and so is the rest of the structure. We have blocks of ice as ‘windows,’ so people outside can see the light from the movies.” Adding to the coolness factor are multicolored lighting accents. “We use a lot of blue light, sometimes a little white. On the stage we can use all colors, depending on what’ll be on the screen.”

From these fanciful but real locations, our survey of exceptionally cool cinema designs moves on to some equally imaginative unrealized and future projects.

Tony Pleskow is principal at Marina Del Ray, Calif.-based PleskowRael Architecture(s) (www.pleskowrael.com), whose notable cinema designs include The Landmark in West Los Angeles (*FJI* July 2007) and Sunshine Cinema in New York City (*FJI* February 2002).

One of the primary ideas of his firm’s breeziest design for a multiplex and more “was to connect the cinema-going experience with the city. A glass case, if you will, enables us to express the form of the theatres as distinctive pods and establishes a dialogue between the exterior and interior spaces. The goal was to develop a transparent envelope within which the theatre forms are clearly visible. The roof also has an outdoor screen with a rooftop lounge and bar,” providing another opportunity “to create social space that generates revenue,” he suggests. “The program blends various forms of entertainment at one location in the urban setting of Santa Monica.”

In Holland, the Multi Mill project is another groundbreaking design concept. Already the winner of an architectural competition to find innovative ways of adding culture and entertainment to an outlying section of the Port of Amsterdam, the Multi Mill is targeting a May 2011 opening. “It is going to be real tight,” admits Kamiel Klaasse, one of the three directors at NL Architects (www.nlarchitects.nl).

“I hope we will make it. And that we will not be crushed by the double dip...”

A triple-decker of distinctly molded wings provides the model for this “cultural stage” that has been variously compared to a turntable, merry-go-round and windmill, and called everything from a waterfront lounge to a “bombed-out pirate ship from *Star Trek*” (*Fast Company* magazine). In native Dutch it’s destined to become a “*Multifunctioneel Cultuurpodium*.”

The idea, per NL Architects, is “to construct a flexible ‘base’ that can facilitate various art forms like theatre, film, fashion, sculpture, sound and light art, dance, video, music,” all with ever-changing backgrounds. (Check out the full presentation slide show at <http://bit.ly/1010cool3>). As for the cinema set-up, Klaasse tells *FJI*, “It was part of what we call the ‘program of demands.’ The client wanted it. Film offers many possibilities. And outdoor cinema is still an unforgettable sensation.”

Hearing the wheels turning in the practical brains of our readers, *FJI* wanted to know: How many people can it hold and where will you put projectors and speakers? “We’re still working on that. The project so far is more or less a sketch. We’re now ‘testing’ different models, absorbing input by the client and the curators. We’re developing different wings, so that we can add sporting facilities like rock climbing or skating and we’re investigating whether we can attach different wings for different occasions. The size will depend on how much money it will cost. Perhaps it will turn out very small...”

Yet it will always have a twist. “Architecture normally is static itself, although it accommodates movement and is animated by light,” Klaasse says of his favorite aspect of the design, “but this object actually transforms. What is quite amazing about the potential is that by rotating the object, it affects the parking lot in front of it that now occasionally can be turned into an actual public square.”

Another transformation underway for Klaasse and his team is “a spectacular project called Groninger Forum, a crossover between a library, museum,

archive, a public square and a movie theatre.” (<http://bit.ly/1010cool4>) While construction will not begin until 2012, NL Architects “have been involved in the conversion of Cinecenter in Amsterdam, a small movie theatre from the ‘70s.”

Almost 15 years after the renovation, this art house (<http://bit.ly/1010cinecenter>) “still is pretty cool,” Klaasse feels. “It has a great atmosphere,” he says, naming the design of “delirious” light fixtures as an example. In the main auditorium, “clusters of five light bulbs hang from the ceiling and a small rotor in the middle touches the cords one after another, giving the suggestion of a slight breeze. We call it virtual air conditioning.”

The last of our refreshing design ideas delivers upon several of the headlined promises. It’s cool, involves pods of sorts, and adds yet another twist to “dinner at the movies” with “craft-size beers...brewed onsite.”

Anticipating a 2011 year-end opening in Red Rock, Texas, the six-screen Flix Brewhouse “will expand beyond the movie-with-a-restaurant theatre concept,” promises Paul Georges, one of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based JKR Partners Architects/Designers (www.jkrpartners.com). “The fresh, contemporary theatre blends the brewery component into the overall experience. This theatre’s operation is the most interesting aspect in that both moviegoers and brewery patrons can simultaneously enjoy the environment. The operational direction of this venue features architecture that reinforces the customer experience from a visual perspective.”

In addition to selecting materials and colors “to create a warm and inviting space in a clean and minimalist atmosphere,” Georges says utilizing soft lighting throughout the lobby/lounge highlights “focal points such as the brewery, bar and ticket areas.” The exterior too presents “the brewery portion of the project with large expanses of glass displaying the kettles and tuns used to craft the beers.”

As long as architects and cinema enthusiasts keep on crafting new ideas, the moviegoing public will always enjoy the view. Let’s toast that with a cool brew!