

## Arta Cinema in Cluj-Napoca The history of the most long-living cinema in Romania

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(Published online 23 October 2018)

### Abstract

*Opened in 1913 in Cluj Napoca, Arta Cinema is the oldest functional cinema in Romania, while preserving the most its original layout and design. Its central location, at the ground floor of Sebestyen Palace, a significant historical monument from the beginning of XX century, offered it the chance to have a consistent impact in the community's cultural life. This cinema attracted central figures of Transylvania's cinematography like Jenő Janovics, being the preferred place for premiers and special projections. After a few years of interruption, mainly due to legal issues, the cinema is now going through an ample process of restoration and technical updates. The management aims to re-open it in the summer of 2018. The article aims to tell this 100 years story of the building, architects, property-owners and cinema, from an architectural, social and technological point of view. Furthermore, its originality will be built on the presentation of the recent works (2017-2018), based on an architectural project done by arch. Attila Kim and the impact of the technological changes on the heritage building that hosts the cinema. A consistent research and fieldwork work was done on the subject, with the help of the actual cinema owner and manager Monica Sebestyen, bringing out a lot of unpublished information on the topic.*

### Rezumat

*Deschis în 1913 în Cluj Napoca, Cinema Arta este cel mai vechi cinematograf funcțional din România, păstrându-și aspectul și designul original. Locația sa centrală, la parterul Palatului Sebestyen, un important monument istoric de început de secolul XX, i-a oferit șansa de a avea un impact puternic în viața culturală a comunității. Acest cinematograf a atras figuri centrale ale cinematografeiei Transilvaniei, cum ar fi Jenő Janovics, fiind locul preferat pentru premiere și proiecții speciale. După câțiva ani de pauză, în principal din cauza problemelor legale, cinematograful trece printr-un amplu proces de restaurare și actualizare tehnică. Managementul își propune să îl redeschidă în vara anului 2018. Articolul urmărește să facă cunoscută această poveste de 100 de ani a clădirii, arhitecților, proprietarilor și cinematografului, din punct de vedere arhitectural, social și tehnologic. Originalitatea articolului va consta în prezentarea lucrărilor recente (2017-2018), făcute pe baza unui proiect arhitectural realizat de arh. Attila Kim și impactul schimbărilor tehnologice asupra clădirii de patrimoniu care găzduiește cinematograful. Au fost realizate cercetări și lucrări de teren pe această temă, cu ajutorul actualului proprietar și manager al cinematografului Monica Sebestyen, fiind prezentate o mulțime de informații nepublicate pe această temă.*

**Keywords:** cinema, movie theatre, movie house, history, Arta, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Sebestyen, art-cinema, Europa cinemas, TIFF, rehabilitation, historical monument.

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## 1. Cinema data

<b>Names</b>	Universităţii (University), Select, Maxim Gorki, Tineretului (Youth), Arta
<b>Address</b>	3, Universităţii Street, Cluj-Napoca
<b>Opening Year</b>	1913
<b>Rehabilitations</b>	1996 2017-2018 – arch. Attila Kim
<b>Capacity</b>	208 places
<b>Architects</b>	Aladár Kármán and Gyula Ullman

## 2. History

The assembly of historical data presented in the first part of this historical chapter were taken from the study *Cinematograful Arta - Studiul istoric* [Arta Cinema – Historical Study], done in 2016, by the Korzo Association, which contains in particular data on the pre-communist history of the cinema. For the communist period, many of the data was taken from the study: *Istoria socială a cinematografului Arta – raport de cercetare* [Social History of Arta Cinema – Research Report] by Palaga Cristine and Rusu Corina. These two studies have not yet been published, as they were prepared for the Cinema Arta PR team, in order to have a documentary role during the cinema reopening process. For this reason, the citations in the following text do not include the page numbers, as the documents are available only in digital edition, not available for public. In the future, it is planned to publish a book on the history of the *Arta Cinema*, bringing together the two studies into a complete text that would present its history from the opening days up to the present. I am personally involved in this project, along with Monica Sebestyén. For the time being we are in the process of raising funds for this publication.

## 3. Sebestyén Palace

The University Cinema (Egyetem-mozgó) opened on 30 October 1913 at the ground floor of Sebestyén Palace<sup>[1]</sup>, a newly-built edifice located on the University (Egyetem) Street in Cluj city center. This was the second building in the city that had a cinema at the ground floor, the first one being the *Urania* building, located on the current *Horea Street*. The Sebestyén Palace is part of an ensemble of two buildings, designed by architects Aladár Kármán and Gyula Ullman from Budapest. Their location is at point 0 of the city, in the southern corner of the central market. The ensemble, formed by the Building of The First Hungarian Insurance Society and the Sebestyén Palace, was built between 1910 and 1913 at the initiative of the entrepreneur David Sebestyén.

The two buildings were designed in reference with the neighboring building of the Savings House and the actual construction was executed by the Remenyik and Sebestyén company from Cluj.<sup>[2]</sup> “The Cluj assembly was not the first building designed by the Budapest-based tandem for the Insurance Company: the headquarters in Miskolc (Hungary) - built in 1909 - being a source of inspiration for the Cluj-based buildings. After the realization of the palaces in Cluj, Kármán and Ullmann made another headquarter for the First Hungarian Insurance Company in Nagykanizsa (Hungary), a smaller “copy” of the Cluj ensemble.”<sup>[3]</sup>



Figure 1. Unirii Square, southern front - Savings House (at left side) and Palace of the First Hungarian Insurance Society (at right side) - vintage photograph (picture source: Octavian Goga County Library Cluj)

The two buildings in Cluj have similar, rectangular plans, built around an interior courtyard. A distinction between these two, which is worth mentioning, is the access to the staircase, which in the case of the Insurance Society Palace is made directly through a gate, while at the Sebestyén Palace it is less direct, through a gang, with the stairs on its side. This difference denotes the more public character of the first building and residential character of the second building.

#### **4. Architects: Aladár Kármán and Gyula Ullman**

The two Budapest-based architects studied in Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart, acquiring the central European architectural culture and then practicing it through their projects in Hungary and Transylvania.<sup>[4]</sup>

*“Aladár Kármán and Gyula Ullman became known in Cluj for the design of the Palace of the First Hungarian Insurance Society and the Sebestyén Palace, built at the corner of Unirii Square and University Street. The architectural language of the ensemble is a combination of classical and secession elements, reflecting their interest towards both currents.”<sup>[5]</sup>*



Figure 2. Aladár Kármán (image source: <http://www.postamuzeum.hu/de/targyak/3424/karman-geza-aladar-1871-1939-epiteszmernok> )

*“Aladár Kármán studied in Munich until 1893, then he spent some time in some other German cities and in Paris in order to complete his theoretical studies as a study trip. Returning to Budapest, in 1895 he joined Gyula Ullman, who obtained his diploma at the Technical University of Budapest in 1894. Their style was influenced to a large extent by the Viennese secession, by Otto Wagner's works. Later, they turned to classicism, adopting new technical solutions.”<sup>[6]</sup>*

## 5. Dávid Sebestyén

The entrepreneur Dávid Sebestyén was one of the city's richest inhabitants, with businesses in particularly in the field of constructions. The two buildings on the University Street were the biggest project he was involved in, as the owner and builder at the same time.

*“The first information related to his activity dates back to 2 December 1895, when, according to the request addressed to the Municipal Council, he built a house in the vicinity of the railway station and a little before a stonework shop and a stable.<sup>[7]</sup> Izabella Molnár interprets this fact as proof of his intention to secure his existence in the stonework business.<sup>[8]</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century he worked with Károly Reményik under the name “Reményikés Sebestyén okleveles építész és építőmester”.<sup>[9]</sup> A report dated August 7, 1912 shows the signature “Sebestyén Dávid és Fia Lajos” as a proof of a family enterprise.”<sup>[10]</sup>*

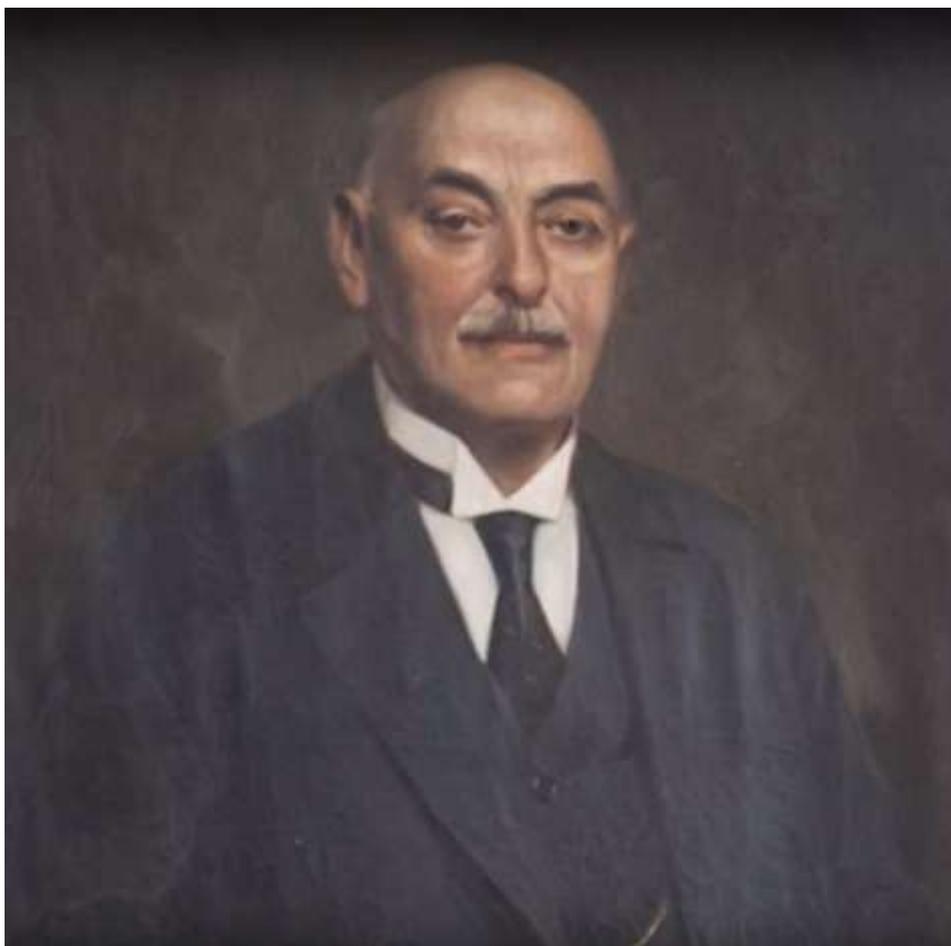


Figure 3. Dávid Sebestyén (image source: documentary film *Clujul și moștenirea lui Dávid Sebestyén [Cluj and Dávid Sebestyén Heritage]*, GHIȚĂ Andreea, TVR Cluj, 2017)

*“In the following years, we find, in connection with his name, various information on several construction and sewerage works, the purchase of numerous lots, and an order to pay the tax after the rent of the Baciú masonry.<sup>[11]</sup> He was also one of the owners of the brick factory in Chinteni and he also owned a cement factory. Being a wealthy Jew, he contributed to the development of the city through various donations and initiatives, such as the foundation of the Jewish hospital.”<sup>[12]</sup>*

## 6. The cinema (1913 opening)

The official opening of the cinema took place on October 30, 1913, and it was announced by the local newspaper *Újság*:

*“The big Hungarian cities, or at least the capital, are trying to progress by following the Western Europe’s cities model where, in the metropolitan way of life, cinema is already an absolute necessity. The new cinema in Cluj was built according to the western model. At the corner of the large newly-built palace on University Street, the University Cinema shows its captivating beauty.”<sup>[13]</sup>*



Figure 4. Cinema Select in the '40 (image source: Monica Sebestyén personal archive)

At that time, the director of the cinema was Kálmán Tompa, a renowned actor of the National Theater, with both director and theater manager experience.<sup>[14]</sup> Two interesting articles from the opening period, appeared in *Ellenzék* newspaper. In the first article, on October 28, 1913 (two days before the opening), the journalist praises the cinema's facilities: *"The theater has about 400 seats, the foyer is decorated with excellent taste, heated with stoves, and for the convenience of the public it will have cold buffet, confectionery and wardrobe."*<sup>[15]</sup> Two days later, on October 30, 1913, on the opening day, the newspaper changed the tone and criticized the conception of the hall:

*"The room would be suitable for anything but a cinema. We are very surprised that there has been no objection, because the hall does not respect the rules of fire safety, security or public health. Although the room has side exits, fire safety is not ensured, because there is no passageway in the middle of the seat rows, so the biggest catastrophe could occur in the event of a fire. On the other hand, the seat rows are too close to each other, so that the slightest screech would cause cramping, which would lead to fatal accidents. As far as public health is concerned, we are not doctors, but to crowd so many people in such a small space - you cannot find a doctor to approve that. Moreover, the walls are so damp that the painting can barely be seen."*<sup>[16]</sup>

The visibility in the press and the existence of these polemics in relation to the cinema actually shows the interest of the society for this new type of entertainment, which would win its place in the everyday life of the Cluj people.

The opening screening of the cinema has featured the German film *The Student of Prague*.<sup>[17]</sup> with Paul Wegener and Stellan Rye as directors. In the following months, November and December 2013, most of the projected films were French (Gaumont), German (Messter), from United States of America (Vitagraph), or Danish.<sup>[18]</sup>



Figure 5. Newspaper program – KolozsváriTükör, 16 Noiembrie 1913 (image source: Korzo Association)

## 7. First world war

The period of the first war was also exposed by an article in the local newspaper *Újság*: “*Since the war, the cinemas of Cluj are doing better and better. The reason of this phenomenon has to be sought out in the people's taste for narcotics. The audience of cinemas is coming from the outskirts of the city and from the central palaces, and it's good to see so many people relieved of worries by laughing resoundingly while watching an American comic movie.*”<sup>[19]</sup>

Access to this pleasure was temporarily interrupted in February 1917, due to a ministerial order from Budapest, requiring the closure of theaters, cinemas and public places to save coal. This order, though mandatory in the capital, it leaves the final decision to the mayor for the province cities. In the case of Cluj, mayor Dr. Gusztáv Haller decided only to shut down the cinemas according to an article in the newspaper *Ellenzék*, in which this decision has been criticized.<sup>[20]</sup> “*The tired audience in these restless times comes to the cinema to relax at a convenient price. Anyone can say anything, but this fun is needed as a meal. Because the soul is craving for rest. The news of the great conflicts and the turmoil of the war influences us and it is pleasant to forget about them for a few hours.*”<sup>[21]</sup>

Two weeks later the decision was cancelled and the Cluj cinemas were reopened. This was also due to the fact that electricity was water-power generated, and heating was done with firewood, so no coal savings were made.<sup>[22]</sup>

On the other hand, the local government had an interest in keeping the cinemas opened, since the owners paid license fees, profit tax, party fee, inspection fee for police and firemen, etc. In addition, during the war, cinemas organized charity performances for the Red Cross, offered discounts for soldiers, having an important social role.<sup>[23]</sup>

During these times, the history of the cinema is closely related to director Jenő Janovics, actor and manager of the Hungarian National Theater in Cluj between 1905 and 1930. Jenő took very quickly the control of the distribution of films in Cluj and in other localities in Transylvania, setting up 26 cinemas and linking his name to the production of 66 films.<sup>[24]</sup> In 1915, in the *KolozsváriTükör* newspaper, Janovics is mentioned as the owner of three cinemas in Cluj (*University, Urania* and *Summer Theater*).<sup>[25]</sup> Although it was the smallest of the cinemas owned by Janovics in Cluj, the *University Cinema* was preferred for premieres and special events: for example, on 20 March 1915, the premiere of the film *Escorta (Tolonc)*, directed by MihályKertész.<sup>[26]</sup>

During the First World War, due to the evolution of international relations, the import of French and American films became more difficult, being replaced in Transylvanian cinemas, with Italian, Danish and German productions.<sup>[27]</sup> This difficulty has been to the advantage of local production, which has been developed through the production studios managed by Janovics.

*“An announcement of the University Cinema on 3 March 1917 gives a glance on the film offer during the First World War. According to the announcement, a different movie was played at the cinema every day of the week, including an iconic example of German expressionism – “Golem”, directed by Paul Wegener - a film with a Nordisk Film star Valdemar Psilander; and a local production of Cluj: “Stories about the writing machine”, with Jenő Janovics in distribution.<sup>[28]</sup> Among the 236 films projected in 1918 in the University Cinema, 41 were Nordisk production, 8 came from the Transylvania studio led by Janovics, and 5 from the Corvin studio, also founded by Janovics, but sold in the meantime.”<sup>[29]</sup>*

## 8. The interwar period

After the end of World War I and the passage of Transylvania into Kingdom of Romania administration, the name of the cinema was changed from *Egyetem-Mozgó (University Cinema)* to *Cinema Select*. This change occurred a second time during the Second World War: between 1940-1945 the cinema returned to the name of *Egyetem-Mozgó* during the Hungarian administration, then was renamed *Cinema Select* when the war ended and it returned to the Romanian administration.

In 1920, the import of American films boomed, while the local production that had developed during the war was suffering.<sup>[30]</sup> That's how the audience got in touch with the Hollywood stars: Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton.<sup>[31]</sup>



Figure 6. Cinema Select – newspaper program in the '40s (image source: Monica Sebestyén personal archive)

*“Jordáky mentions the UFA film diaries in the Select Cinema program since April 1930.<sup>[32]</sup> These journals, which changed from week to week and featured diverse news from around the world, were projected before the program. The German studio UFA (Universum Film AG) had already produced soundtracks in 1930, including them in the*

*program, probably signaling the passage of the Select Cinema to sound projections. Film magazines have been propaganda tools even from the beginning. UFA Tonwochetransmitted the message to the nationalists, and after 1935, UFA produced the unique diary of Nazi Germany, titled Deutsche Wochenschau.*”<sup>[33]</sup>

The *Select Cinema* was the third in Cluj that made the transition to sound projections, the first being the *Urania Cinema*, and the second one was the *Summer Theater*. The first sound projection is noted in the weekly program of the *Ellenzék* local newspaper on April 3, 1930, the film *The Singing Fool* (1928).<sup>[34]</sup>

## 9. The second world war

In 1940, after the Hungarian army entered Cluj, the cinema program suddenly changed, marking the change of administration:

*“(...) the first two films came to us. The Hungarian soldiers brought them and were quickly scheduled at all the Cluj cinemas. In order to be able to cope technically, the cinemas hired carriers to transport the films around the city as signs of victory. (...)While they quickly changed the inscriptions on the cinemas’ facades, they have also gorgeously decorated the interiors. The inscription on the facade of the Select Cinema was completely removed. The inscription with golden letters that slept underneath, *EgyetemMozgóképszínház*, shines again, after twenty years of hiding, as though nothing had happened in the meantime.*”<sup>[35]</sup>

From Second World War, we have some information from Richard Kubina, the son of *Arta Cinema*’s manager from the ‘40s. He remembers that in 1944, when the Russian army arrived in Cluj, the cinema was deliberately set on fire, and *Arta* did not function for a significant period of time after.<sup>[36]</sup>



Figure 7. Photographs from the '40 (image source: Monica Sebestyén personal archive)

## 10. Communist period – the ‘50s

*“In 1945, his last year of life, Janovics was trying to recoup the concession of the Select cinema, which had been confiscated in 1940. In exchange for the concession, which was eventually not granted, he promised, among other things, the performance of "Film-Journale " propaganda, which - wrote Janovics - had a much longer-lasting effect than thousands of posters and articles.”<sup>[37]</sup>*

The date of 13 November 1948 <sup>[38]</sup> was the moment of cinemas’ nationalization and the beginning of a total political control over the program and the projected films. This control was carried out through the Cinexfilm State Company, which, during the same year, took over the private film distribution companies.<sup>[39]</sup>

Under the new Soviet influence, the cinema changed its name to *Maxim Gorki Cinema*. This name was also given to three other cinemas in the Cluj region: in Bistrita, Turda and Aiud to mark the "Romanian-Soviet friendship period".<sup>[40]</sup> *“The Soviet influence was found both in the cinema program and in the way the program was presented in the local press: The Fear of the Seas – a film rich in action and beautifully executed, proving that the Soviet film is superior to any other film.”<sup>[41]</sup> Or: This film, which promises a more beautiful, brighter future, although it shows the dark gulf of Russian life in the last century, is the triumph of the dialectical representation of the reality characteristic of socialist realism.”<sup>[42]</sup>*

An interesting moment of the 1950s is the emergence of "cultural contracts" between cinemas and production companies, that were designed to popularize propaganda films among workers, as well as to ensure a constant audience for cinemas:

*“Each cinema has to have cultural contracts with all the businesses and institutions within its area to ensure the distribution of tickets at the workplace for the working people, and on the other hand, the cinema gains a permanent audience among the working class.”<sup>[43]</sup> Also, in order to increase attractiveness, competitions were organized: on the subject of a movie, the working people have the opportunity to put on paper the main ideas of a movie and thus better understand the educational role of the film.”<sup>[44]</sup>*

## 11. Communist period – the ‘60s – ‘80s

In 1965, the name of the cinema changed from *Maxim Gorki* to *Tineretului (Youth)* on the background of more loosen relations with the Soviet Union. During this period, morning performances with youth film screenings were organized, and in the evenings the program was reserved especially for comic and police films. This educational-fun profile has been preserved until the '80s when the name of the cinema was changed to *Arta*.<sup>[45]</sup>

The matinee projections were still addressed to children and youth, in collaboration with schools and high-schools in the area. Cartoons were screened for children of the kindergarten age while for high school students or for those who were to pass the baccalaureate they were screening historical films or other films considered appropriate for this age group.<sup>[46]</sup>

The socialist period is characterized by regulation and standardization of the cinematographic industry, going up to the standardization of the interior design of cinemas. Thus, the elegant armchairs remaining from the interwar period will be replaced by austere wooden furniture that was

described as inconvenient and contrasting with the architectural decorations of the hall. Another problem specific to all the cinemas in the country was that the halls were not heated properly during the cold season, the public being forced to keep their street clothing during the projection. Also, a remembrance of many viewers is related to the specific smell of gasoline in the theaters, as this was the usual way of disinfecting the floor, slowing down the process of wood rotting.<sup>[47]</sup>

The program of the '80s is reconstituted mainly based on the memories of the public interviewed by Cristine Palaga and Corina Rusu done for the realization of the research *The Social History of Cinema Arta*:

*“The cinema's operating program was every day from 9am to 10pm. There were matinees, movies were also running at noon, when the room was less crowded. Throughout the week, the same film was projected. Monday was intended to introduce into the circuit a new film that ran for a week. Efficiency was not a condition - the film was projected regardless of the number of spectators in the room. If there was a demand from the public, the movie could be broadcasted on even more times, during the night, or the running schedule was extended for another week, but these were exceptional cases. To keep the movies longer, they were running at least two times, premiered at one of the cinemas in the center, then gradually moved to the outskirts of the city.*

*More specifically, the films had the following circuit: the high-demanding ones were premiered at the Republica, then projected at Arta and Victoria, and then reached the cinemas in the neighborhoods. At Dacia and Mărăști, since they were having two halls, different films were broadcasted throughout the day. The movies were received from Bucharest, and locally there were several people who were evaluating the films, by expected audience and they were scheduling them in the cinemas. Several copies of the original film were done at the Mogoșoaia lab, which were sent to Cluj and deposited at Maiakovski Street.*

*Regarding the types of films that were running at different times, the public memories tell us that after the war, the predominant films were Russian and Soviet. Later, Western, French, German films began to be projected. Also, Indian films were having a lot of success; the music of these movies was heard throughout the city. In the 1980s, the Romanian historical films were also successful, especially the series of Sergiu Nicolaescu, of which we mention Mărgelatu or Haiducii.”<sup>[48]</sup>*

Ticket prices were accessible during the communist period, the memories of those surveyed in the Study of Social History, amounting between 1.5 and 2.5 lei for the *Cinema Arta* and higher prices for *Cinema Republica*, 4 lei. (relative to purchasing power of those times, these prices were considered relatively low).<sup>[49]</sup>

*“During the socialist era, in the event of ticket depletion, there was a gray market to buy them. With the demand being great, it is often the case that people want to look for alternative ways: first, there is a possibility of a "little deal" with cinema staff who used tickets as a form of symbolic capital. It was also possible to exchange services. The staff also provided free access to the film of the children living in the vicinity of the cinema. Other key actors of this informal economy are "ticket touts". They were buying a large amount of tickets, which they were selling at overpayment, approaching their potential customers right in front of the cinemas. These things happened with the complicity the policemen; the work has been tolerated by the authorities for a long time. By the end of*

*the 1980s, this informal economy was being regulated, restricting the maximum number of tickets that could be purchased by one person to six.*<sup>[50]</sup>

Even though in the communist era, *Arta Cinema* had lost its importance in favor of the *Republica* and *Victoria* cinemas, it continued to host some gala premieres or screenings attended by Romanian directors like: Mircea Daneliuc, Dan Pița.<sup>[51]</sup>



Figure 8. Cinema Arta, during the '80 (image source: Minerva Archívum, 1986)

## 12. The period after 1989

After changing of the regime in 1989, the name of the *Arta Cinema* was preserved, as well as the educational side, by continuing the early projections for scholars. Instead, the evenings began to be occupied almost exclusively by Western films and only later, the cinema started to build a specific profile based on the distribution of art films.<sup>[52]</sup>

In 1996, the cinema was renovated and modernized by the replacing of the seats and by bringing new updated projectors. Also, the hall was painted, the entry doors exchanged, and a foyer bar was opened to buy refreshments, popcorn and sweets.<sup>[53]</sup>

The 1990s and 2000s consisted in a gradual decrease of public, caused by several factors: television, private videotapes, rising ticket prices and lower purchasing power, and then the generalization of the internet and the emergence of cinemas in malls.

The cinema remained the property of the state until 2010 and was managed RADEF RomaniaFilm until 2012.<sup>[54]</sup> After this year, the cinema was closed and then returned to the heirloom of the former owners, architect Monica Sebestyén.

Since 2000, when it enters the Eurimages (Europa Cinemas) circuit, *Arta* has outlined its specific art cinema profile in which European and national films are screened, together with independent

films, documentaries, etc. The art film becomes emblematic for the Arta Cinema's schedule.

After 1990, but especially in the 2000s, other types of events took place in the *Arta Cinema*: film festivals (ClujShorts, TIFF, Comedy Cluj), events organized by various NGOs, student associations (AStA - Architectural Days), professional organizations (OAR) or foreign cultural institutes (French Cultural Institute, German Institute).

### 13. 2017-2018 Rehabilitation

After the retrocession of the cinema, the first step taken by the new owner was to test the public opinion about the potential reopening of the cinema, in order to learn the interests and expectations of the public potential. This consultation was done through both social media (Facebook page) and by face to face meetings between the PR team and people interested in film and cinema fields. I personally participated at one of these meetings on 31 August 2017.

In parallel with these consultations, the complete rehabilitation of the foyer and the hall was started in May 2017 and the re-opening was firstly scheduled for the spring of 2018. This process is much slower than desired because of the difficulties caused by self-financing.

The rehabilitation is based on a project done by LUNDI ET DEMI studio, architect Attila Kim. The studio already has a good experience on cinemas rehabilitation, as they have completed a well-acclaimed project at "Elvira Popesco" cinema, at the French Cultural Institute in Bucharest (2011-2012).

Due to financial difficulties the Arta cinema opening was re-scheduled for the end of 2018, works being in progress at date of this article. The rehabilitation project drawings are not accessible yet, and we expect them to become available only after the works are completed.



Figure 9. Rehabilitation (Image source: Facebook - Cinema Arta)

During the construction site I visited the cinema twice, being invited by the owner, Monica Sebestyén.<sup>[55]</sup> In this way, I had the opportunity to see the evolution of the works and techniques

used, part of Attila Kim's project. In the foyer area the floor was cleaned and the ceramic tiles of the '70s were preserved and a new heating system with radiators installed. These radiators are concealed by wooden elements, integrated into the general design while the electrical installation will be changed and updated. The finishes are generally monochromatic, with white accents on the background of gray shades. In the hall, wooden panels are to be installed on the side walls while the original ornaments have been preserved. A great attention has been paid to the existing joinery which will be preserved and rehabilitated as part of the project.

As part of the reopening process, on January 30, 2018, I have organized a meeting between Monica Sebestyén and Adrian Nechita (founder of *Iluminis* furniture brand). This meeting took place in order to set up a small space of exposure for the local designers in the cinema foyer, where they could expose / sell their products to a wider public. It was also discussed that *Iluminis* shall create some special furniture items for the cinema foyer, with references to the movie world and the history of cinema.

## 14. Re-opening 2018

Even during the construction site, the PR team of the cinema has thought of a series of events announcing that "something is happening" to catch the interest of the passers-by. The first such event was #avizierularta, which involved the creation of film posters by local artists and their placement in the old cinema's billboards.

For several month the billboards hosted works done by *George Roșu*, *Chris Barsony*, *Rebekka Ivácson*, *Brassai Szende*, *Pojum Edith* și *Kürti Andreea*.<sup>[56]</sup> The presence of the works has not been explicitly rendered, leaving it to the passers-by to imagine their role.



Figure 10. Sophia Lauren and Natassja Kinski posters made by George Roșu (image source Facebook: Cinema Arta)

A second step after #avizierularta will be the organization of an exhibition and a temporary bar in the foyer. The exhibition will contain a timeline with information from the history of the cinema, along with all the works that have been exposed on the billboards in recent months. The opening of the foyer also takes a step inside to the official opening of the hall (steps: billboards - foyer - hall). So, the audience will have the opportunity to get in touch with the cinema, its history, the construction site and the rehabilitation process.

The story goes on...



Figure 11. Cinema's new logo (image source Facebook: Cinema Arta)

## 15. Techniques, conclusions

The cinema, although one of the newest architecture programs, has seen a rapid and continuous evolution of an almost unexpected complexity. The history of cinemas, albeit relatively short, becomes a true story of glory, decadence and reinvention, like copying the scenarios of movies projected on their screens. The complexity of this history has been determined by a wide variety of factors that have influenced it: the development of technology, the evolution of architectural styles, the change of people's way of life, the changing of tastes and, last but not least, its inevitable commercial side.

We could say that this mixture of influences forced cinemas to always be synchronized with the spirit of the times in which they were built and used, and sometimes even represent an avant-garde.

Being an architectural program that objectively depended on the evolution of film and projection techniques, it had to continuously keep up with the new technologies. In the case of Arta Cinema, from a technological point of view we can point out some key moments:

- a. Sebastyen Palace construction: in order to allow for a cinema hall, with large openings, at the ground floor of a four-stories building, the architects had to use relative new structural techniques for their times. A structural compromise was the presence of the side columns in that hall, which separates the seat rows and the circulations.
- b. Electricity: at the beginning of the 20th century, in order to have a permanent cinema in a city, electricity was required. This is why in Cluj (1907), the cinema appeared a bit later than in other Transylvanian towns like Braşov (1901) or Oradea (1906).<sup>[57]</sup>
- c. At the time of its beginnings, cinema technology was such amazing for the uneducated public, as it was considered almost magic.
- d. Another important moment was the introduction of sound screening which at Arta began on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 1930. (3 years later than the beginnings in the USA)

- e. The next step in the technological evolution were the color movies, which were introduced around 1939 in the USA. We have no data yet on the first color projection at *Arta Cinema* but we expect it wasn't very long time after.
- f. In 1996, during the rehabilitations the projectors were changes with newer updated ones, able to provide better quality.
- g. During the 2017-2018 rehabilitation it is intended to purchase digital projectors. As the prices of professional equipment is very big, the cinema will firstly use and amateur projector and the professional ones will be bought through a crowdfunding program.

The moments above are pointing out the way *Arta Cinema* adapted to new technologies in order to stay updated and be able to provide quality entertainment to its public. But this story is not unique, it can be the story of all the cinemas which are in a continuous evolution ever since their openings at the begging of the last century.

## 16. Annexes:

### a. The project, plans

The oldest plans we have been able to obtain date back to 1974. They are part of a review of the whole building, done by Avram Gheorghe.<sup>[58]</sup>

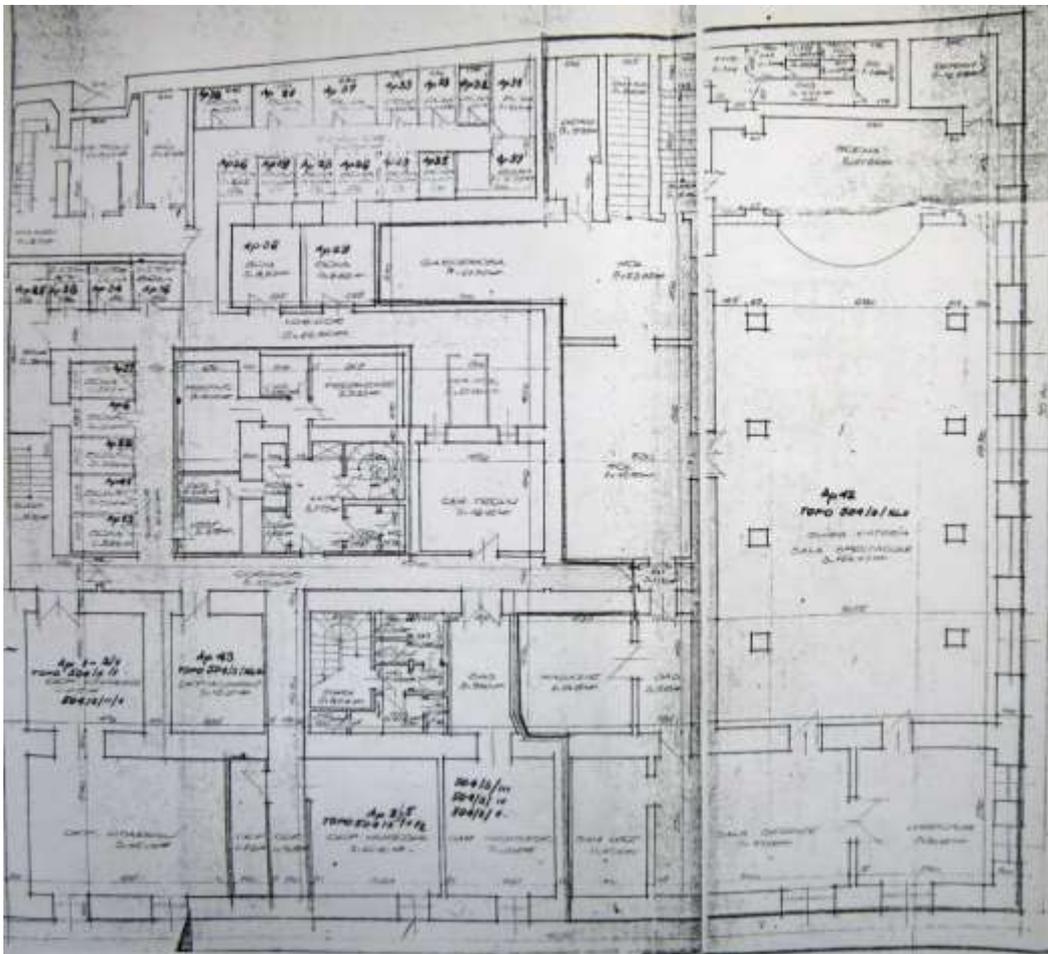


Figure 12. Basement plan

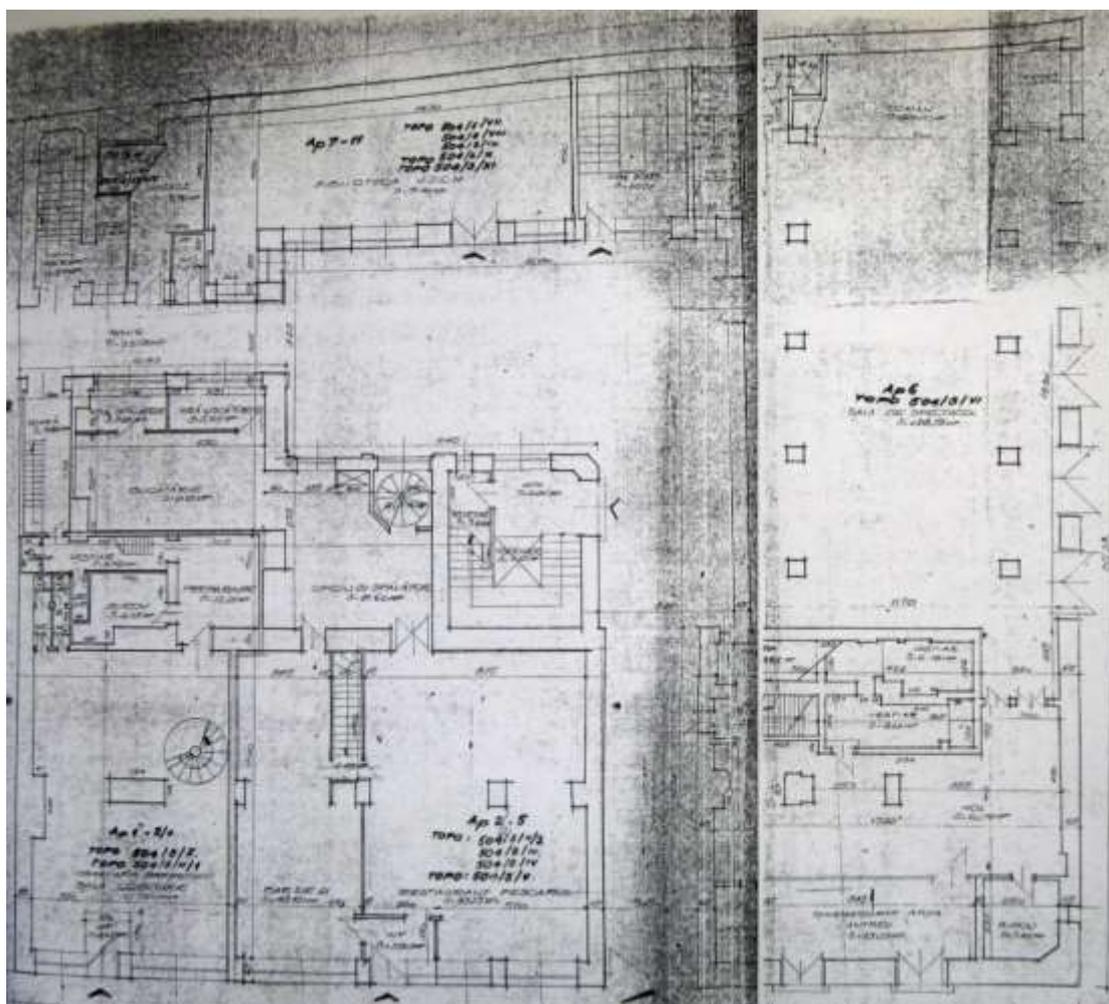


Figure 13. Ground floor plan

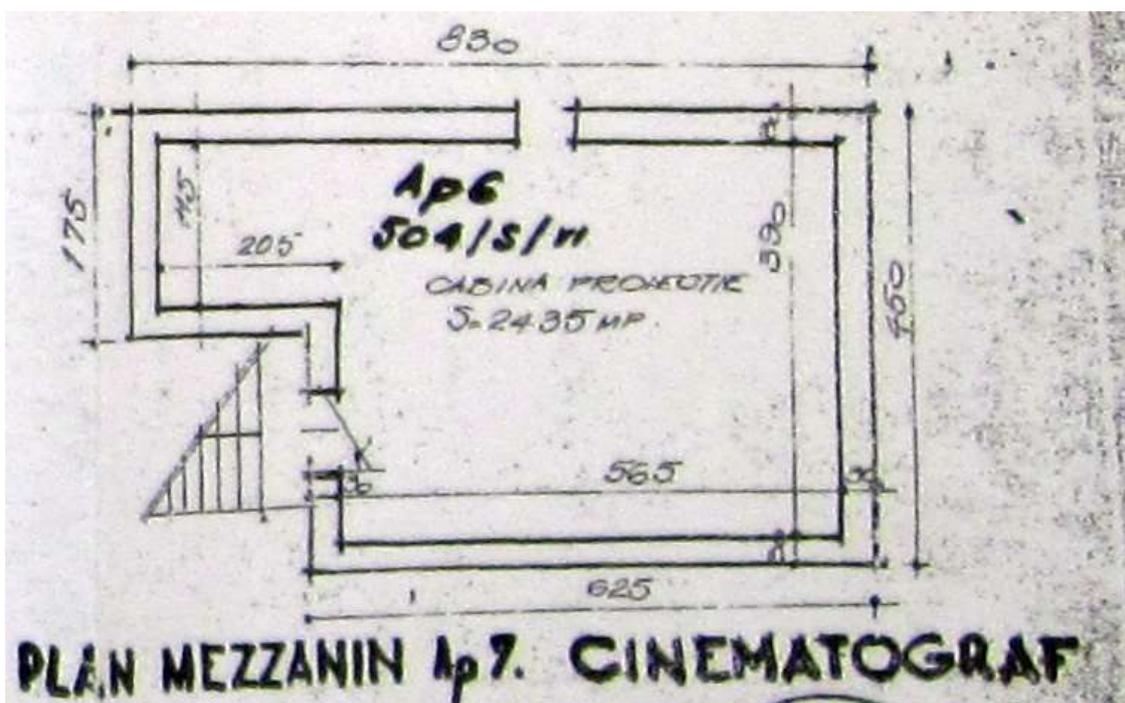


Figure 14. Mezzanine floor plan

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