

Braunschweig 03 February, 2009

## **The Dawn of a New Cinema in Braunschweig Members of filmfest have established the UNIVERSUM Kinobetriebs GmbH**

From the summer of 2009, after two years of meticulous planning, an arthouse cinema will open, offering local audiences quality viewing all year round. Located right in the middle of town (Neuen Straße 8), the re-opened venue, on the premises of the former Universum cinema, will feature two spaces for watching films, and a café. This endeavour is the product of a newly established company, Universum Kinobetriebs GmbH, comprised of members of the organisation behind the International **filmfest** Braunschweig.

The six partners in this new firm include the artistic director of the film festival, Volker Kufahl, as well as Edgar Merkel and Marit Vahjen, both long-serving members of the festival's board of directors, Angela von Schreiber-Stroppe, a journalist who also works for **filmfest**, Peter Wentzler (from the advertising agency, "Hinz und Kunst") and a founding member of the festival, and Heinz Wilke, an architect who contributed designs and drawings for the new cinema. Volker Kufahl is now also managing director of the Universum Kinobetriebs GmbH.

When the property was placed on the real estate market a few months ago, the opportunity to re-activate the building as a cinema arose. The property was purchased by Gunnar Kersten Wilke who was, from the beginning, interested in ideas for using the building as a cinema. He invested considerably in the project to assure that the building fulfils all of the basic requirements that a cinema in the middle of town has to meet. Universum Kinobetriebs GmbH and Mr. Wilke have, therefore, signed a long-term tenancy agreement guaranteeing to usage of the property as a cinema.

Renovation, modernisation and the installation of new, essential facilities in the cinema required the new company's investment of nearly 600.000 Euro. "This was only possible thanks to substantial financial and political support from the both the city of Braunschweig and Volkswagen Financial Services AG, who have generously sponsored this project with a five-figure sum. Additionally, overwhelmingly positive reactions from those attending cinemas in Braunschweig have given us reason, over the last two years, to persevere and undergo a significant financial risk", as Volker Kufahl noted.

"An arthouse cinema in the space that was once a cherished cinema, the Universum, will add to the cultural scene here, making the arts in Braunschweig even more exceptional", according to Lord Mayor Dr. Gert Hoffmann. For this reason alone, those undertaking this creative business endeavour are to be applauded! Hofmann is certain that the Universum will soon, once again, be one of the leading addresses for

those interested in cinema, both in Braunschweig and, indeed, the entire region.

“Our support for the initiative to establish the arthouse cinema is an expression of our commitment to ambitious cinematic art in Braunschweig as well as our continuing commitment to our city”, as Frank Witter, chairman of the board of Volkswagen Financial Services AG, noted, elaborating on the Mayor's speech.

Both the Filmförderungsanstalt (German national film board) in Berlin and Nordmedia (film board for Bremen and Lower Saxony) in Hanover granted additional financial support for the new cinema. Construction commenced at the beginning of 2009. Martin C. Wegge and Christine Folwatschni-Bitter of FBW Architects, in Braunschweig, are responsible for the renovation and re-construction of the building.

Contact:

Frank Terhorst

Press & public relations

+49 (0)531 75597 / fax +49 (0)531 75523

terhorst@filmfest-braunschweig.de / [www.filmfest-braunschweig](http://www.filmfest-braunschweig)