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# This Incredible Cinema in Paris Is Going Viral for Its Retro-Futuristic Interiors — I'd Travel to the City Just to See It Firsthand

Nestled on a quiet street near the Champs-Élysées, the Élysées Lincoln's new look by Louis Denavaut is film inspiration made tangible



BY GILDA BRUNO PUBLISHED 15 JANUARY 2026 IN [FEATURES](#)

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At Paris's Élysées Lincoln, storytelling is out in full force, whether in its boundary-pushing cultural programme or its immersive decor.

(Image credit: Geoffrey Hubbel. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln and Paris Society Events. Design: Louis Denavaut)

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There are films that you only need to watch once to remember them forever. Settings, storylines, and characters that stick with you regardless of time, as if they weren't simply part of a fictional plot you have, up until that very point, never heard of before, but a searing retelling of events, a relationship, or even just a feeling, that have shaken up your life.

Reopened in October after a nine-month restoration, Paris's Élysées Lincoln cinema is a legendary yet discreet, family-owned address which, since 1969, has lured culture-discerning Parisians and curious passersby alike into its velvety *salles de cinéma*.

Unlike [Paris' hotels](#), which seem to be multiply each year, Élysées Lincoln is one of the few surviving independent picture houses in the city today — a rare bird in an industry reshaped by streaming.

# INSIDE ÉLYSÉES LINCOLN: PARIS'S TEMPLE OF ART HOUSE



The Merle family's *Élysées Lincoln* cinema has been a staple of Paris's 8th arrondissement since 1969. With Louis Denavaut's reinterpreting of its interiors, it is now ready to meet the demands of contemporary life.

(Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of *Élysées Lincoln*. Design: Louis Denavaut)

In 2025 alone, cinema attendance dropped by around 15% compared to the previous year, *France 24* reports, forcing many movie theater owners to reconsider their long-term plans.

Brothers Louise and Samuel Merle, the siblings behind the Champs-Élysées fixture, had thought about shutting *Élysées Lincoln* down, or transforming it into something *else* entirely, before the pandemic hit.

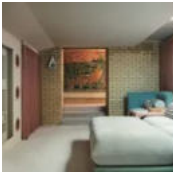
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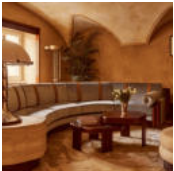
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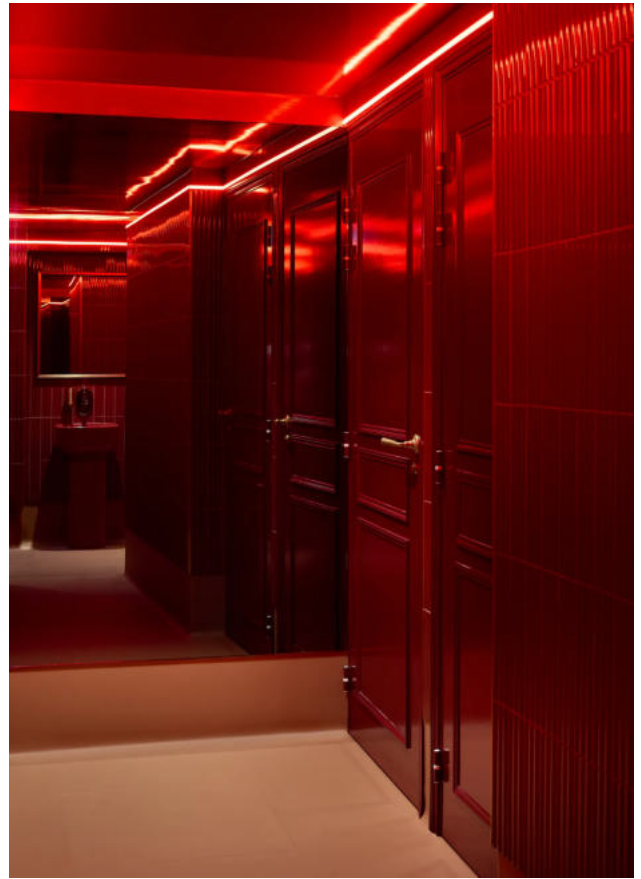
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After all, when it opened in the 8th arrondissement in the late 1960s, the venue took over the site of a former [Paris restaurant](#), so giving it a different purpose wasn't completely off the cards. Then, an idea struck.



Here, cinema takes center stage in a multifunctional, immersive design setting conceived to simultaneously engage all the senses.

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut



A sense of tension, of suspense, imbues the movie theater in its entirety, including the sleek passages that take you from one of its rooms into the next.

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut

To keep a cinema like Élysées Lincoln alive, Louis and Samuel Merle realized, they had to find a way for it to cater to contemporary [lifestyle](#), where sociality and cross-disciplinary entertainment — not just film, but also [art](#), literature, and theater, all the way to music and cuisine — collide.

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And so, after spending nearly two years traveling around the world to soak up inspiration from its most iconic picture houses and other related projects, they returned to Paris with an alternative, radical new concept and a clear goal:

"Creating a hybrid venue combining high-quality film projection, modular seating, and event-based programming, supported by a strong architectural identity".



"Every detail, from circulation and reception to textiles, lighting, and furniture, was conceived as part of a coherent, immersive universe, placing human experience at the center." — Louis Denavaut

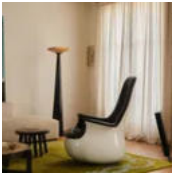
(Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut)

Crafting it required a skilled design eye.

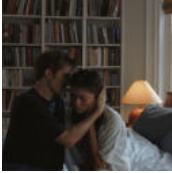
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More precisely, the restoration, which sees neon-lit, vibrating interiors unfold through a hypnotic succession of [porthole windows](#)-dotted ceilings, enveloping fabrics, strikingly decorated, textured walls, and evocative, *A Space Odyssey*-like passageways, called for someone versed in balancing function and aesthetics.

Someone who could preserve the building's legacy while also daring to be bold with recasting its structural and technical infrastructure in support of a one-of-a-kind, cinephile experience.

## THE (RE-)DESIGN: CRAFTING THE CINEMA OF THE FUTURE

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A glimpse inside Élysées Lincoln's Auditorium screening room, a 110-square-meter room bathing in cinematic comfort, state-of-the-art acoustics, and nostalgic hues.

(Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut)

The choice fell on interior architect and designer [Louis Denavaut](#), the recently appointed creative director of cinema design agency [ABFM](#), who was tapped to imagine the new chapter of Élysées Lincoln by the group's founder, Alain Balzac.

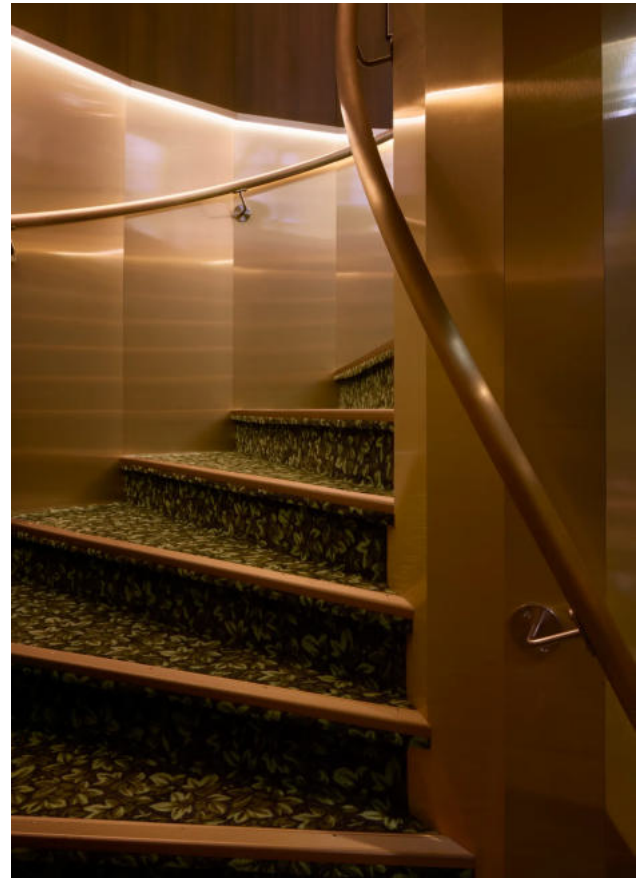
With a background in art and a portfolio of projects straddling luxury retail, residential, as well as office and furniture design, and a characterful but methodical approach informed by the essential vision of the Belgian school, and the organic modernism of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, Denavaut poured his eclectic expertise into the makeover of a destination that would have to entertain visitors 360-degree, and no longer simply through picking the right curation of films.

In today's world, comfort, acoustics, climate control, and electrical needs are all equally important elements for a cinema striving to offer something more than one can expect of commercial chains.



"Élysées Lincoln demonstrates that independent and art-house cinemas can survive and thrive..."

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut



by embracing bold architectural identities and hybrid economic models." — Louis Denavaut

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut

That's why, at the reborn Élysées Lincoln, "every detail, from circulation and reception to textiles, lighting, and furniture, was conceived as part of a coherent, immersive universe, placing human experience at the center," Denavaut explains.

This is a mission the Élysées Lincoln picture house is pursuing more than just metaphorically: the modular seating and furniture incorporated in its current design, for instance, allow its 1970s-inspired environments to be rearranged so as to accommodate anything from conferences, exhibitions, round tables, and festivals to personal, as well as corporate social gatherings.



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...ONE MODULAR PIECE AT A TIME



Down under in Élysées Lincoln's Club, vision and sound become one in a space envisioned as a stage for cultural gatherings, music events, and more.

(Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut)

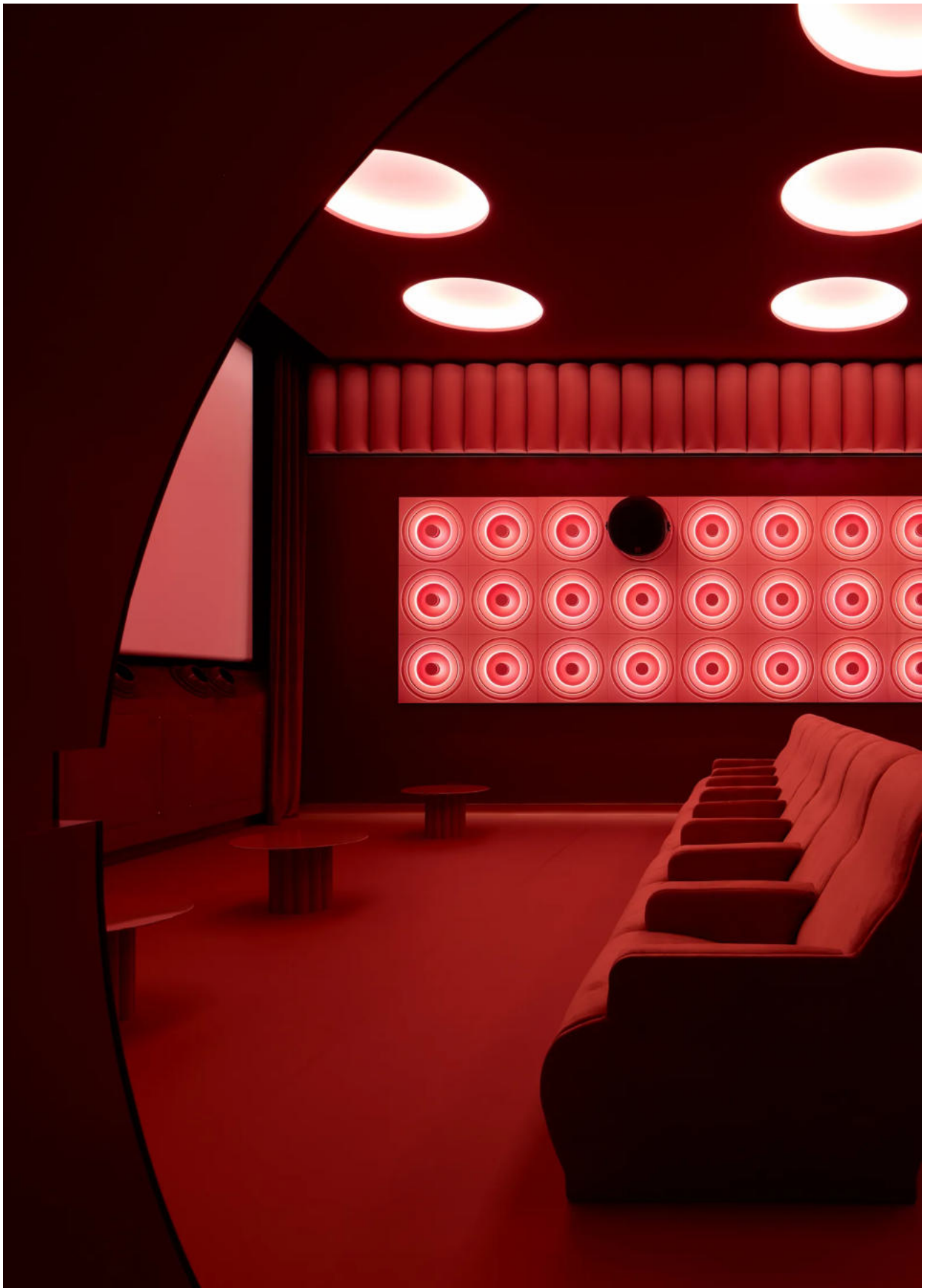
This stylistic choice, which enables Élysées Lincoln to shape-shift continually, aspires to set an optimistic example "for the many small independent cinemas currently closing in France and around the world, offering both an aesthetic and economic framework capable of inspiring their reinvention and sustainability long-term," Denavaut continues.

Through modular screening rooms, custom-designed seating, advanced sound and projection systems, and the careful preservation of historic elements, including the original, acoustic-aiding, plaster staff ceilings, the movie theater "was transformed into a flexible cultural space," he explains.

One that responds more fittingly to the leisure demands of a public with a shrinking attention span, while their appetite for entertainment — intended in all of its manifold and, sometimes, even coinciding, forms — continues to grow.

## TOWARDS A 360-DEGREE, CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

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Élysées Lincoln's multifunctional space par excellence, The Club satisfies visitors' needs for entertainment on demand, hosting anything from film premieres to panel talks and live music events.

(Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut)

Though *film d'auteur* remains focal for the movie theater, part of the Marle-owned, picture house trio **Multicine**, as also shown by its ongoing, French and Italian cinema-rich screening calendar.

That Élysées Lincoln boasts three different screening rooms, namely The Studio, The Auditorium, and The Club, makes a full-immersion in cinema — of yesterday, today, and tomorrow — possible, with titles ranging from evergreen classics and cults to experimental documentaries, themed retrospectives, and the latest successes from Cannes, the Oscars, and the Venice Film Festival.

*So, need a breakdown?* Pick The Studio for a cocooning, nostalgia-led cinematic journey, cadenced by kaleidoscopic, cherry plum, red, and cream patterns on both floors and walls. Go for the airier Auditorium for a demanding watch, best enjoyed with friends giggling in between Prada green velvet seat rows. And, last but not least, treat yourself to The Club on an electrifying night out.



The Studio at Élysées Lincoln is an intimate yet mighty screening room, inspired by the pioneering essence of film d'auteur and 1970s' art-house cinema.

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut



Though its facade's neon-lit signage and gold-clad look will remain as impressed in visitors' minds as what's inside.

Image credit: DEPASQUALE+MAFFINI. Courtesy of Élysées Lincoln. Design: Louis Denavaut

The Élysées Lincoln might be going viral for its [Wes Anderson](#)-esque revamp. But for the ABFM creative director, Louis Denavaut, there's more to it than a sensory-pleasing refurb.

"Élysées Lincoln is intended as a model and a statement," he explains. "It demonstrates that independent and art-house cinemas can survive and thrive by embracing bold architectural identities and hybrid economic models."

Cinephiles will be flocking to the Élysées Lincoln this winter. And you should, too, before its Instagram and TikTok success make it impossible to [book](#).

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Speaking of moving images, don't miss out on our curated itinerary to all of the most inspiring [filming locations of \*Emily in Paris\*'s latest run](#), which takes place between Paris, Rome, and Venice, Italy's capital of romance.



[Gilda Bruno](#) LIFESTYLE EDITOR



Gilda Bruno is *Livingetc*'s Lifestyle Editor. Before joining the team, she worked as an Editorial Assistant on the print edition of *AnOther Magazine* and as a freelance Sub-Editor on the Life & Arts desk of the *Financial Times*. Between 2020 and today, Gilda's arts and culture writing has appeared in a number of books and publications including *Apartamento*'s *Liguria: Recipes & Wanderings Along the Italian Riviera*, Sam Wright's debut monograph *The City of the Sun*, *The British Journal of Photography*, *DAZED*, *Document Journal*, *Elephant*, *The Face*, *Family Style*, *Foam*, *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, *HUCK*, *Hunger*, *i-D*, *PAPER*, *Re-Edition*, *VICE*, *Vogue Italia*, and *WePresent*.

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