

The art and the Basque Diaspora (Bayonne/San Sebastián, 25–26 Feb 2016)

Bayonne (France)/San Sebastián (Spain), Feb 25–26, 2016

Deadline: Sep 30, 2015

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Call for papers

International Colloquium

The Arts and the Basque Diaspora

(19th-21st Centuries)

25th-26th February 2016, Bayonne/San Sebastián

This international colloquium is being jointly organized by the Société d'Etudes Basques (Eusko Ikaskuntza Iparralde) and the platform of cultural projects Ezmugak, based in Irun, as part of the celebrations of Donostia-San Sebastián 2016, European capital of culture. It is supported by several institutions and private enterprises, among which the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour. This is the scientific point of the cultural project entitled "The arts of the Basque Diaspora", which is composed of an exhibition-competition of contemporary art, which will be on display in the seven provinces of Basque Country (in France: Bayonne, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, Mauléon; in Spain: Donostia-San Sebastián, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Pamplona, Bilbao), and of a screening cycle of movies and documentaries.

The Basque Diaspora

Beside their strong identity and their exceptional language, Basque people are known as tireless globetrotters. Their whale fishing guided them to North-American coasts from the Middle Ages, long before Christopher Columbus and after the Vikings sailors. In spite of their secular maritime tradition, the end of the 18th century initiated an important area of exodus for profound political instability in France and Spain, which was often unfavourable for their condition, their culture and their singular identity. The Napoleonic Wars, the Carlist conflicts, industrialization, unemployment, Franco-Prussian war, and so many motives were for exile in the 19th century. During the following decades, conscriptions and both World Wars, as well as Franco dictatorship, motivated them for looking for a better future in the four corners of the world; all the more as a few states then developed an attractive policy so as to people their lands, as Argentina and United States did by broadcasting their appeals to shepherders. Nowadays, for socio-economical reasons or by love of travel, numerous natives of the Basque Country still emigrate to find El Dorado.

Thus, over the course of the last two centuries, what has been baptized the "eighth province", the Basque Diaspora, has born, which is composed of a plurality of individuals as heterogeneous as

the diversity of their lands of haven, but whom common roots older than Europe unite. Eighth province because the Basque Country consists of seven provinces, three on French soil – Labourd, Basse-Navarre, Soule -, which form Iparralde (North side), and four on Spanish territory – Viscaya, Guipúzcoa, Álava, Navarra -, which form Hegoalde (South side).

Despite the distance of their homeland, the Basque from abroad have always known how to make their culture continue, that is deeply anchored in tradition and immaterial heritage, through numerous folkloric festivals or the official Basque Houses web (Euskal Etxea).

The Arts and the Basque Diaspora

From an anthropological, linguistic or historic viewpoint, the Basque Diaspora has been a central concern of scientific studies for many years, either with the researches of the laboratories IKER and ITEM of the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, or with the works of the Universidad del País Vasco, the Universidad Pública de Navarra and, also, in United States, the ones of the Center for Basque Studies of the University of Nevada Reno. Among other issues, folklore, identity, transmission, literature, have been the focus of many studies.

It is, though, essential to note that Art History is of minor importance in Bascophile researchers' studies in the Basque Diaspora context. At least this discipline has not focused yet on a global and problematic reflexion about it in spite of the exception of a few punctual studies. Non obstante plastic and visual arts are not excluded from this cultural history, as they echo the regionalist movement, which widely expanded in Europe from the second half of the 19th century and of which Basque Country is not obviously an exception. For these reasons it is from now necessary to lead a fundamental research about the Basque material, artistic and cultural heritage that is "delocalized" or in connection with migratory movements, and which should fit into the two last centuries' history.

Because we have the reality that Basque people are present in all the fields of artistic production connected with its emigration. A still superficial inventory leads to predict a heritage that outs to be so ample as the world they have appropriated. From the moving arboglyphes of Nevada forests, and from sculpture, as the emblematic Monument to Basque Shepherders by Nestor Basterretxea, to painting, with the success of artists from the Basque Diaspora, as the surrealist Roberto Matta o the argentine Sergio de Castro, this is a reality, which is factual but still unrecognised.

The same occurs as far as architecture is concerned since numerous Latin-American architects, such as Ordorika, Tomás and Legoreta in Mexico, or Noel in Argentina, have roots in the Basque emigration. Beside Basque vernacular architecture in the argentine delta of Parana for example, Basque emigrants were patrons of remarkable houses as Curutchet house, which was built by Le Corbusier in La Plata and is classified "Monumento Nacional", or the Estrugamou palace in Buenos Aires. Connection between Art and the Basque Diaspora also comes through European artists' mobility on the American scene in particular during their exile caused by the Franco dictatorship, as illustrate the paths of Zumeta, Chillida, Oteiza, Arrue, Nagel, Tillac, Basterretxea and so many others... To all these examples is added cinema, which is not in margin, as demonstrate Mexican director Iñárritu's career and the recent Basque cinema festival in Montevideo.

In another hand, as a representing subject, Basque people are valued in a museographic approach within heritage institutions such as the Park of Basque Adventure in America, in Canada, or The Bask Block in Boise city (Idaho). But they also inspire photographic and cinematographic production, which alternately are anthropological and, on the contrary, stereotyped and even picturesque, what illustrate the entertaining but erroneous *Thunder in the sun*, a western directed by Russel Rouse in 1959. They even are figured in the very contemporaneous and popular murals of street art, which are interspersed in the American Far West from Oregon to California. At last, for some of them, either success or the return of political stability caused their return to their country of origin. After having made a fortune or thanks to the peace-making, they went back home, which was the case for the Légasses, the Lescas, the Signorets, the Beisteguis, as far as Iparralde is concerned, and sculptors Basterretxea and Chillida, in Hegoalde, said families and artists who claimed in the arts and architecture, with more or less eloquence, the remembrance of their painful exile and of their ancient promised land.

Lines of reflexion

Thus, as so many minority people in situation of exile, the Basque have contributed to their emigration land's cultural plurality, in particular in the Americas but also all around the world, Europe included. Numerous questionings result of Basque Diaspora's material built and artistic heritage:

- Portraits and paths of architects and artists from Basque emigration: Who are those architects and those artists? Which are their paths? What motivation for their exile? How do they live their emigration?
- The survival or the absence of Basque identity: How does or does not Basque identity express? Do the emigrated artists proclaim their Basque identity in their works or do they integrate into their new society so much that they give up their roots?
- The representations of the identity and of the Basque Diaspora: How does the Basque identity is represented by Basque artists and their homologues from abroad in visual arts and architecture? But also, how does iconography figure the themes of Basque's departure and foreign life far from their homeland?
- The "Other's" influence on the artistic creation of Basque Diaspora: What influence do the contact with host community and the Promised Lands exercise on artistic and architectural production?
- The form and the discourse of the artistic works: What kind of artistic works do Basque emigrants produce? What role do they have as artists or architects in the new society they built?
- The artistic and architectural productions due to Basque emigrants who returned to their homeland: What happens with the ones who have returned? What buildings or artistic works do they realize? How is the impact of their travel or of their origins expressed in the art?

Given the particularly ample dimension of the theme, those questions do not constitute an exhaustive list. As a matter of fact, this international colloquium aims at increasing knowledge about the Basque Diaspora, arts of the contemporaneous period, and the minority people in exile, by focusing on plastic arts, as painting, sculpture and architecture, as well as on modern visual arts, as photography and cinema, all of it from the end of the 18th century to nowadays.

Coordination and scientific direction

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Scientific committee

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Organizing committee

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SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Places and dates:

25th February 2016: Musée Basque et d'Histoire de Bayonne

26th February 2016: Museo San Telmo, Donostia/San Sebastián

Languages: French, Basque, Spanish, English

Relevant disciplines: Painting, sculpture, architecture, cinema, photography.

Periods: End of 18th century until 21st century.

Sending of papers

The proposals of about 1500 signs or 300 words maximum, and accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae and a list of publications, must be sent before the 30th September 2015 to the following mail: viviane_delpéch@yahoo.fr

The papers won't exceed 20-25 minutes. The acts of the international colloquium will be published.

Information: viviane_delpéch@yahoo.fr

CFP: The art and the Basque Diaspora (Bayonne/San Sebastián, 25-26 Feb 2016). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 11, 2015 (accessed May 24, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/10970>>.