

## SAN TELMO MUSEOA

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www.santelmomuseoa.eus | santelmo@donostia.eus  
@santelmomuseoa

## HOURS

Tuesdays to sundays, 10:00 to 20:00

## ADMISSION

General: 6 €  
Reduced price: 3 €  
Free admission on tuesdays, all year round

STM

San Telmo Museoa



DC donostia kultura



G|O|R|D|A|I|L|U|A

Gipuzkoako Ondare Bildumen Zentroa  
Centro de Colecciones Patrimoniales de Gipuzkoa



EUSKO JAURLARITZA  
GOBIERNO VASCO

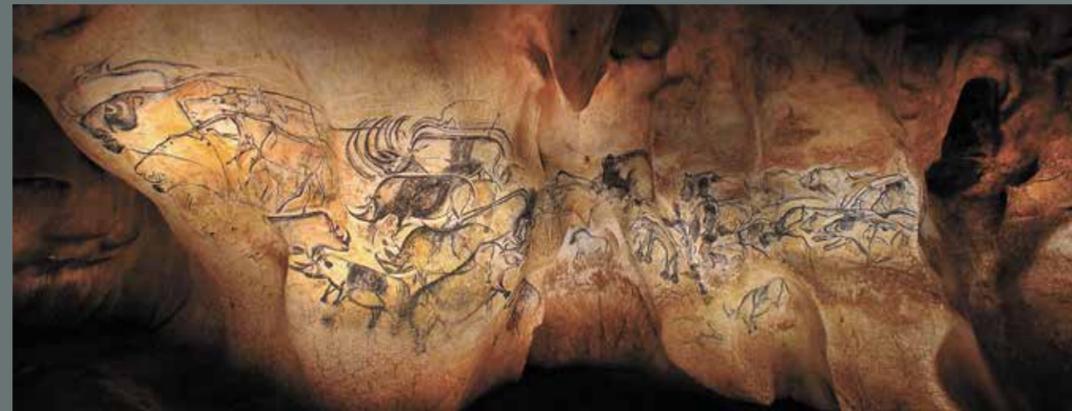
KULTURA ETIA HEZKUNTZA  
POLITIKA SAILA  
DEPARTAMENTO DE CULTURA  
Y POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA



EL DIARIO VASCO

## Our admired rivals

Human fascination with lions has been a constant throughout time. The oldest evidence of this fascination are the beautiful representations of these felidae made by Late Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers.



*"...their merit is all the greater if we consider the high degree of perfection they often reached in the execution and fidelity, given that those ancient artists reproduced what they observed in their lives with great realism in their drawings. [...] The quaternary artist was not just a perceptive observer, he had a deep feeling for beauty and artistic expression. However, we do not believe it was only "aesthetic feelings" which drove these artists to create such works..."*

(Hugo Obermaier in Fossil Man in Spain, 1925).

### Lion panel

Upper Palaeolithic  
Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave  
(Ardèche, France)

The spectacular panel of lions is the most important of the panels found in this cave, in which 447 representations of 14 different species of animal have been counted. This cave was discovered in 1994 and was declared a World Heritage Site in 2014.

Photograph: Patrick Aventurier.  
Caverne du Pont d'Arc



### Panel with lions

Engravings  
Magdalenian  
Armintxe Cave (Lekeitio, Bizkaia)

Photograph: Juan C. López Quintana. Tracing: C. González Sainz  
Armintxa Project. Regional Government of Bizkaia



### Bison panel (feline inside)

Aurignacian painting  
Altxerri B cave (Aia, Gipuzkoa)

Photograph: Gipuzkoa Regional Government - Jose Latova  
Tracing: Diego Garate Maidagan



### Lion figure

Isturitz Cave (Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France)  
Magdalenian  
Replica (original in reindeer horn)

Association Gaztelu - Grottes d'Isturitz & Oxocelhaya



### Lion

Aurignacian (approximately 40,000 years old)  
Vogelherd Cave (Germany)  
Replica (original in mammoth ivory)

Private collection



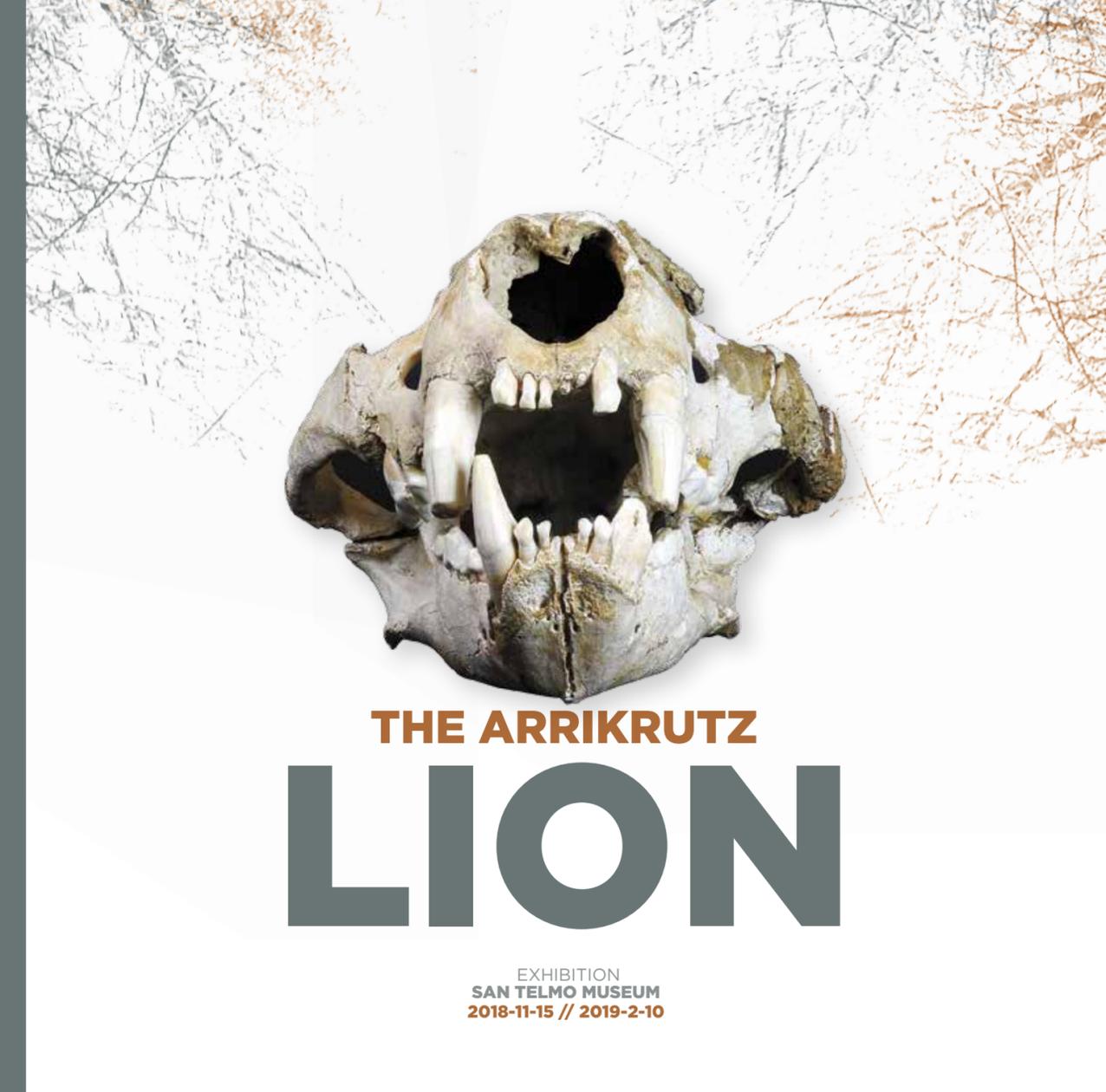
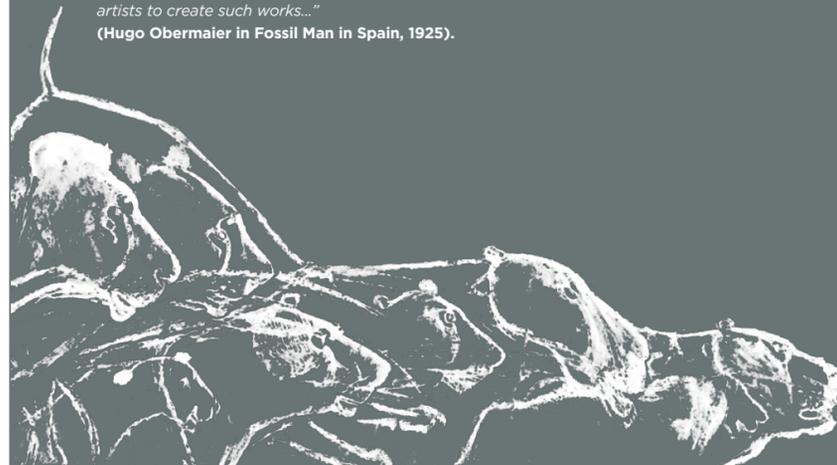
### "Löwenmensch" (Lion-man)

Despite the name, some researchers postulate that the "lion-man" could be a woman.

Aurignacian  
(approximately 35,000 and 40,000 years old)

Hohlenstein-Stadel Cave (Germany). Ulm Museum, Germany

Replica (original in mammoth ivory). Museo de la Evolución Humana, Burgos



# THE ARRIKRUTZ LION

EXHIBITION  
SAN TELMO MUSEUM  
2018-11-15 // 2019-2-10

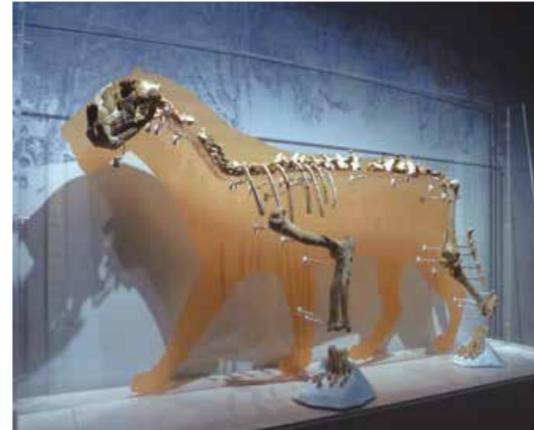
Although today we associate lions with the African savannah, during the Pleistocene they also lived in Eurasia and North America. The oldest lion fossils in Europe are seven hundred thousand years old. These Eurasian lions, bigger than present-day lions, belonged to the species known as "cave lion" (*Panthera spelaea*) and occupied different ecological niches during both glacial and inter-glacial periods.



Our ancestors lived alongside these large felidae and drew or engraved them on the walls of many caves and represented them in small statuettes. Thanks to these images we know that either the males did not have a mane at all or they had a very small one.

We do not know the cause of their extinction but their disappearance could be related to the climate change which took place at the end of the last ice age and hunting by humans.

The most complete cave lion skeleton on the Iberian Peninsula has been recovered at Arrikruz cave (Oñati, Gipuzkoa).



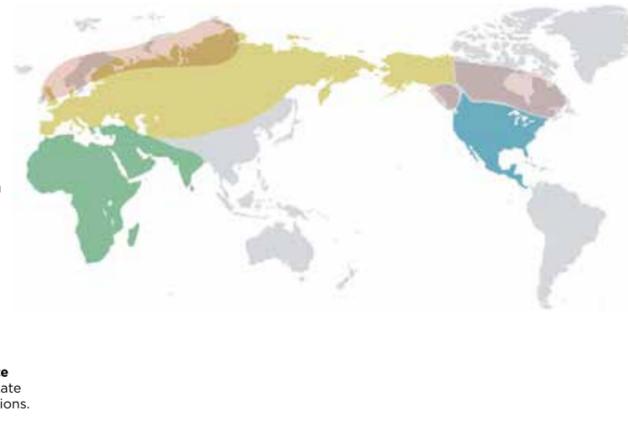
### The Arrikruz lion

GORDAILUA (Gipuzkoako Ondare Bildumen Zentroa/ Gipuzkoa Heritage Collection Centre)-Eusko Jaurlaritzza/ Basque Government

The Arrikruz lion skeleton is currently the most complete on the Iberian Peninsula. It was discovered by Iñaki Zubeldia in 1966, and studied by Jesús Altuna. It belonged to an adult individual which died in the cave. It has been estimated to have been 1-1.2 m tall to the withers, weighing about 250 kg. Despite its large size, superior to current males, it is not one of the biggest; there were cave lions weighing more than 300 kg.

### In every corner

During the Late Pleistocene (126,000 to 11,700 years ago) there were three groups of lions which traditional palaeontology has classified as three distinct species, something supported by some genetic studies. As we await core DNA data, these three groups correspond to present-day lions (*Panthera leo*), cave lions (*Panthera spelaea*) and American lion (*Panthera atrox*).

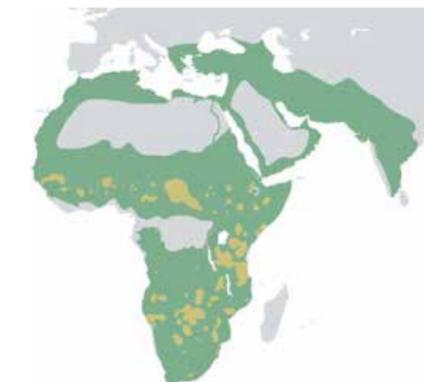


### Kings in danger

Of the three species of lion alive during the Late Pleistocene, only *Panthera leo* survived the transition to the Holocene (which began 11,700 years ago). During this period, this sub-species occupied the entire African continent, the Balkan Peninsula, the Caucasus and south-west Asia, from Anatolia to the majority of India.

Today, there is only a small population in India (in the Gir Forest National Park), and African lions occupy highly fragmented territories to the south of the Sahara.

According to the IUCN, in the period from 1993 to 2014 their population has dropped by more than 30%, and this brutal trend towards reduction in their area of extension and population appears to be ongoing.



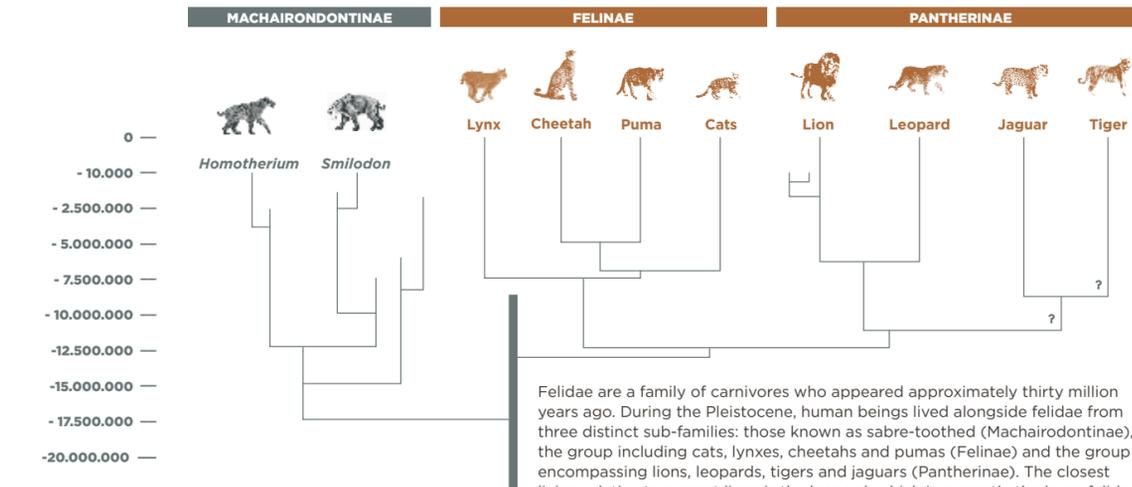
The different cultures that lived alongside lions, such as Mesopotamia, Greece and Egypt, have left us multiple representations of them.

**Lion hunt**  
Ashurbanipal Palace  
7th century BC Assyria  
(now Iraq)  
© Trustees of the British Museum

**Heracles' fight with the Nemean lion**  
Greek amphora  
6th century BC  
© Trustees of the British Museum



### Family portrait



Felidae are a family of carnivores who appeared approximately thirty million years ago. During the Pleistocene, human beings lived alongside felidae from three distinct sub-families: those known as sabre-toothed (Machairodontinae), the group including cats, lynxes, cheetahs and pumas (Felinae) and the group encompassing lions, leopards, tigers and jaguars (Pantherinae). The closest living relative to current lions is the leopard, which is currently the large felidae with the widest geographical distribution.

This panel shows a simplified "family portrait". New fossils and genetic studies are enabling us to discover the evolution of these carnivores in greater detail.

### Hypercarnivores

Lions are social hunters who hunt different species of ungulate. In Eurasia and Beringia we know that during the Pleistocene they mainly hunted bison and reindeer, but also horses and rhinoceroses. On the Iberian Peninsula, where there was little presence of cold-climate fauna, they hunted large bovidae (bison and aurochs), deer and horses.



### Teeth

Lions and felidae in general follow a hypercarnivore diet. Their teeth are especially adapted for this type of diet: they have fewer dental pieces and have cutting edges like scissors, enabling them to cut meat.

**Left hemimandible**  
(*Panthera leo fossilis*)  
Middle Pleistocene.  
Trinchera Galeria site. Atapuerca  
Replica  
Private collection



**Cranium and mandible**  
(*Cuon alpinus*)  
Obaretta Cave (Bizkaia)



**Cranium with mandible** (*Crocuta crocuta*)  
Carrión archaeological site, Pinilla del Valle (Madrid)

**Mandible** (*Crocuta crocuta*)  
Labeko Koba (Arrasate, Gipuzkoa)

Dholes or Asiatic wild dogs are social canids, smaller than a wolf but bigger than a fox. They currently survive in Central Asia. They were common in Europe throughout the Middle and Late Pleistocene, and they survived on the Iberian Peninsula until the Early Holocene.

The spotted hyenas that inhabited Europe were bigger than the present-day African ones and, despite certain physical differences, they belong to the same species. Their social biology is very unusual and the females, bigger than the males,

are group leaders. They have been present in Europe since the Early Pleistocene and the oldest European spotted hyena find is that of the T4 level in Gran Dolina (Atapuerca Sierra). They became extinct during the Late Pleistocene.



**Cranium and mandible** (*Panthera pardus*)  
Allekoaitze Cave (Gipuzkoa)

Leopards arrived in Europe in the Middle Pleistocene and the last examples survived on the Iberian Peninsula until the beginning of the Holocene. In Europe they were solitary hunters of medium-sized prey such as goats and ibexes.

Archaeological Museum /  
Regional Government of Bizkaia

**Cranium with mandible:** Regional Archaeological Museum of Madrid  
**Mandible:** GORDAILUA (Gipuzkoako Ondare Bildumen Zentroa /Gipuzkoa Heritage Collection Centre), Eusko Jaurlaritzza/Basque Government

GORDAILUA (Gipuzkoako Ondare Bildumen Zentroa /Gipuzkoa Heritage Collection Centre), Eusko Jaurlaritzza/Basque Government



**Cranium** (*Ursus spelaeus*)  
Askondo Cave  
(Mañaria, Bizkaia)



**The front paw of a hunter**  
Phalanges, metacarpals and carpus of the right front paw of the Arrikruz lion (*Panthera spelaea*)

Females hunt in a coordinated manner, stalking, and can reach high speeds for a short period of time. During hunting, front paws play an important role in bringing down and immobilising their prey, which they kill by strangulation or asphyxiation.



**Hunting accident?**  
Pathological ribs of the Arrikutz lion (*Panthera spelaea*)

Fossils also give us information about the lifestyle of animals from the past. The Arrikruz lion skeleton shows signs that during the life of this animal it fractured three ribs, which were in the process of healing when it died.



**Another lion**  
1. Right femur of the Arrikruz lion  
2. Right femur of *Panthera spelaea* from the Larrayoz gallery (Arrikruz Cave)

In the same cave system where the lion skeleton was discovered, the femur of a second lion has also been recovered. The weight of this individual has been estimated at more than 330 kg. The difference in size between these two femurs could be due to sexual dimorphism.

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