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San Telmo Museoa

**C O M E A N D S E E Y O U R S E L F**  
**TEACHER'S OR GROUP LEADER'S BOOK**  
A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AROUND  
THE SAN T E L M O M U S E U M  
FOR ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

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**SAN TELMO MUSEOA**

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## COME AND SEE YOURSELF TEACHER'S OR GROUP LEADER'S BOOK A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AROUND THE SAN TELMO MUSEUM FOR ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

The San Telmo Museum is a museum of society. It is very large and focuses on many different areas and themes. Although only a little information is provided in relation to each object, and issues of great depth and complexity are presented somewhat superficially, even a cursory visit to all the rooms takes at least three hours. To this, you must add another hour if you wish to view all the audiovisual displays and yet more time is required, at each visitor's discretion, for the interactive modules. This is excessive even for an individual visit, and as a group it would be unbearably tedious. Moreover, the aim of any museum should be just the opposite, namely to ensure a pleasant, enjoyable experience that visitors would wish to repeat. Indeed, there are few museums that can be viewed in their entirety in a single visit, and San Telmo is definitely not one of them.

The proposal presented here is an invitation to discover the museum. Many different themes and areas will be touched upon in relation to the various rooms and collections, but not all aspects will be explored. The aim rather is to give visitors a taste of the different themes represented in the museum: the museum's architecture (or rather, architectural styles), the principal collections acquired over a century ago, historical objects viewed from a modern perspective, beautiful, extraordinary exhibits set right alongside other apparently much more mundane ones and both old and modern pieces (whoever said that "museum piece" is synonymous with old junk?). In short, the tour offers a series of pointers to help visitors understand our past and our present, as well as to foster their general awareness of the importance of heritage. Because this is a Museum of Society.

To this end, the tour follows a simple pattern which is repeated in all rooms and for all themes.

The aim is to make the visit more cohesive. The pattern is as follows:

- an explanation of the historical context of the theme in question;
- an examination of an exhibit which represents this context, because each object is an eye witness to some moment in history;
- an examination of another exhibit with intrinsic value, in order to raise visitors' awareness of the importance of heritage;
- a complementary explanation of the museum's functions.

The teachers or group leaders of groups which decide to visit the museum independently, without going on a guided tour, should have no trouble finding all the objects and themes proposed here. For your convenience, maps are provided of the different floors, indicating the location of each proposal. Nevertheless, we strongly recommend that you visit the museum beforehand in order to prepare your own, customised route through the exhibits.

The whole visit should take around an hour and a half.

## Outline of the guided tour:

### At the start of the visit:

Welcome, introduction to the museum and explanation of the activities to be carried out.

### Church: video (13 min.).

### Ground floor:

As you come out of the church, the guided tour starts in the rooms on your right: “Signs of Spirituality” and “Footprints in our Memory”.

Leave the cloister and go through the door to the right of the tower. Climb the stairs to the upper floor (there is also a lift if you require one).

### Upper floor:

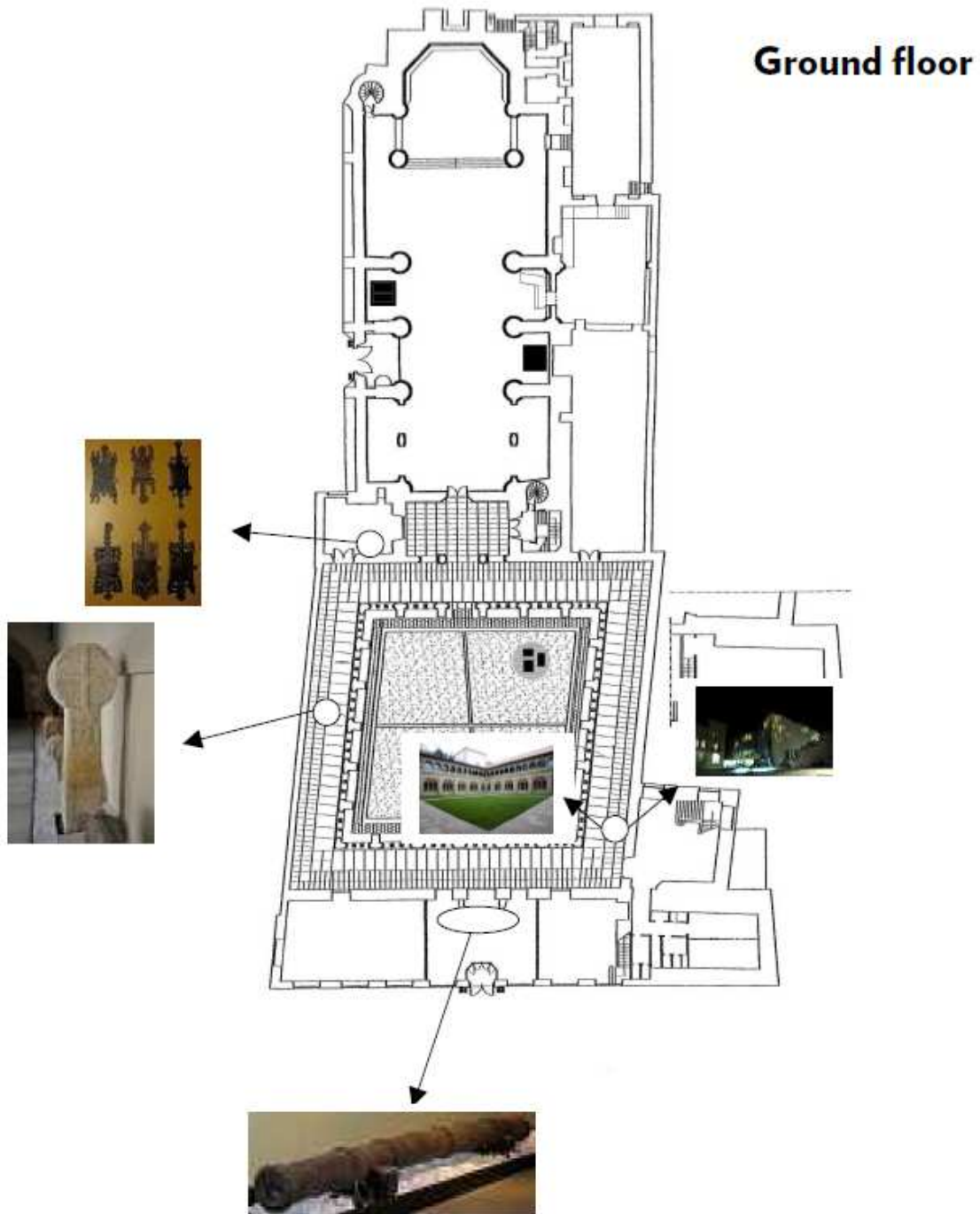
Access the cloister from the tower and go through the door immediately on the left, to the room entitled: “100 years of Basque art”. Once you have finished the explanations of the selected items in this room, leave by the other door which leads out again to the cloister. There is a stop for further explanations at the point at which the two passageways meet. Continue along the cloister to the “Tradition survives” room, in the choir stalls at the back of the church. Return again to the cloister and enter the “Industry, the driving force behind change” room. Return once again to the cloister for the penultimate explanatory stop.

### At the end of the visit:

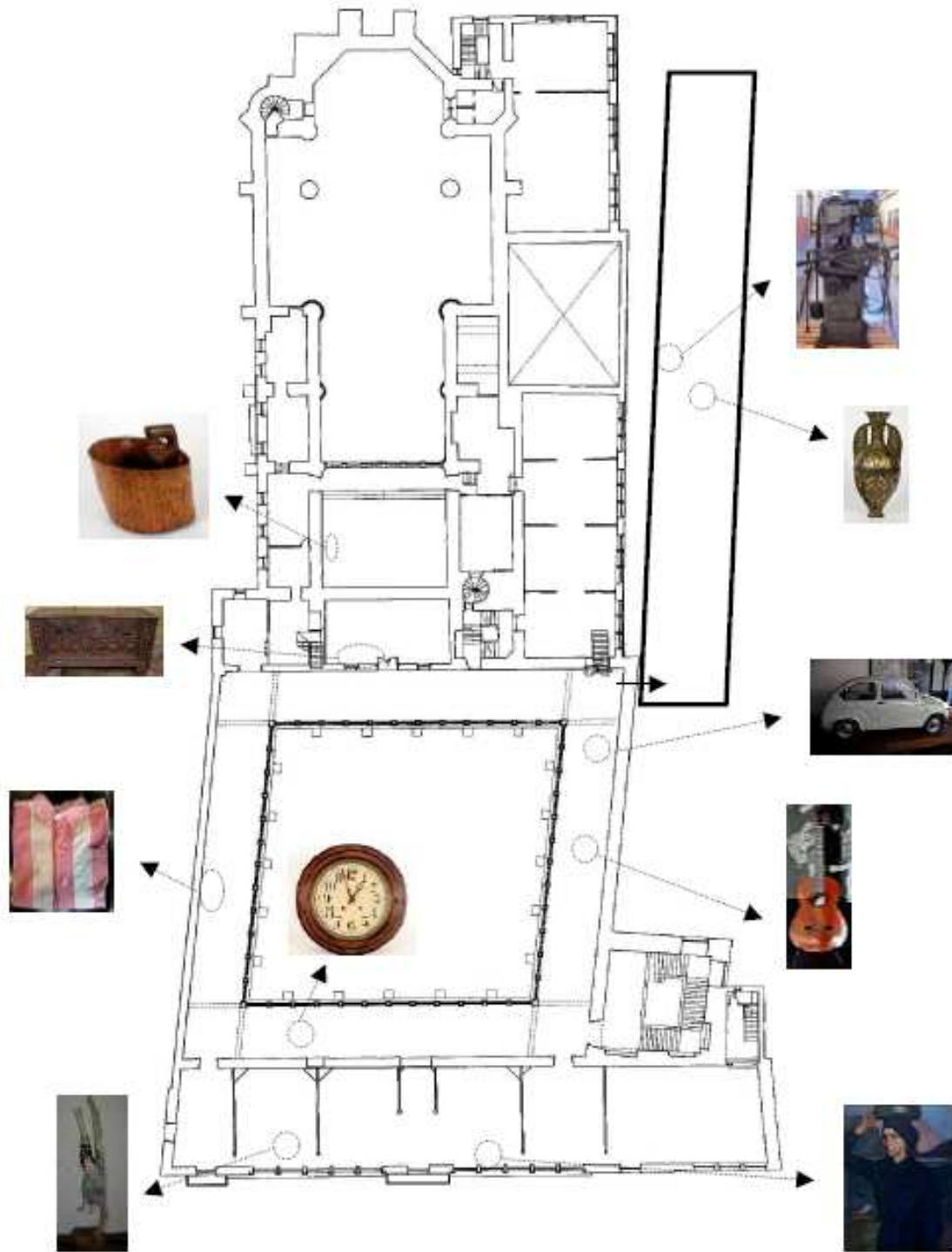
Go down the steps in the tower to the lower cloister. Final explanatory stop, focusing on the museum itself and its buildings.

At the end of the tour, you can either leave directly through the tower to the reception area, or visit the temporary exhibitions on the ground floor of both the old and modern buildings.

Location on the map of the exhibits mentioned in the commentary:



## Upper floor



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## MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH In the “Signs of Spirituality” area

### CONTEXT

For thousands of years, the Basque people (like so many others) were characterised by their strong religious beliefs, both pagan and Christian, although sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the two. Up until the time that secular thought began to spread throughout Western Europe, including the Basque Country, the official religion was manifested in accordance with the dictates of the Catholic Church. Popular religious fervour, on the other hand, had its own set of characteristics resulting from the merging of previous beliefs and Christianity. Examples of this include *argizaiolas* (long candles wrapped around wooden boards) and steles.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

This collection of *argizaiolas* is extraordinary. Firstly, because these objects have never been used outside the Basque Country; and secondly, because today, they are hardly ever used any more. Consequently, these *argizaiolas*, which were collected by the museum over a century ago, are today of enormous value. But their value is not economic; rather it lies in their ability to take us back in time to a world of beliefs which have long since disappeared.

Indeed, beliefs tell us a lot about the society that holds them. What we now consider “decorations” may perhaps have had a symbolism we are nowadays unaware of. We know that the people who made these objects believed in two possible afterlives, heaven and hell, and that to escape hell it was important to light the way for those souls striving to reach paradise. This is why they lit these candles in church. But they didn't light them anywhere or for just anyone. Traditional society was not based on the individual, but rather on the home, not in the sense of a physical building but rather as the bonds that linked family members to each other. Every family had its specific place in the church, and each place corresponded to the old family tomb. And it was in the specific family place in the church that it was the lady of the house's right and obligation to light the *argizaiola*.



## ... TO EXHIBIT

It is said that death is the great leveller; but differences and levels continue to exist in the way mortal remains are laid to rest. Although some steles, such as those erected for those who died a sudden death in areas of open ground, were individual, most were family markers and each household had their own. Although the majority have fallen into disuse, some steles can still be seen in the graveyards of small towns and villages.



This stele contains carvings of a pair of wolves and the coat of arms of Eulate Palace. The height of the stone itself betokens a desire to stand taller than the other steles, symbolising the family's desire to stand above the other families in the region, even in death.

## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

A museum cannot display all its exhibits at once, both due to lack of space and because case after case of all the infinite varieties which exist of each object would be too much for the general public to take in.

However, in the case of its *argizaiolas* and steles, San Telmo has made an exception to this rule and its entire collection is permanently on display. This is both because of their intrinsic value (there are very few remaining outside this museum, especially as regards *argizaiolas*) and because they exemplify the museum's principal functions: to collect, preserve (and where necessary, restore), study and display. Nowadays, we call this "showcasing heritage".

## THE BASQUE GOLDEN AGE, OR SHOULD WE SAY IRON AGE?

In the “Footprints in our Memory” room

### CONTEXT

Although gold generally holds pride of place in most people’s minds, iron is in fact the most valuable metal because of both its abundance and the fact that it can be used for practically anything. Although gold, copper and bronze were mined and used earlier in history, it was iron that triggered the true metal revolution. For better or for worse, our history and the history of our society are based on the use of iron, especially as regards the manufacture of arms.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

The Basque Country, a thoroughfare between the Iberian Peninsula and Western Europe, contained many high-quality iron mines. In order to understand the expansion of the iron and steel industry in the Basque region, it is important to bear in mind the set of circumstances that came about in the late Middle Ages, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

During this period, activity shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic axis, and the Basque region went from being a peripheral area to being right at the centre of things.

At the same time, people learned how to use the power and force of water to work the bellows and mallets in the forges. This discovery was not restricted to the Basque Country alone, but here, the abundance of mines, fast-flowing rivers and forests (which provided the raw material required for charcoal) resulted in the building of hundreds of forges in both Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia.





## ... TO EXHIBIT

The classical world had been centred around the Mediterranean, and that area continued to be the hub of European activity until, following the long, harsh crisis today known as the Middle Ages, the axes of power shifted further north. With African in Arab hands and Asia and Eastern Europe under the control of the Turks, the Silk Road was disrupted and the Atlantic Ocean began to play an increasingly prominent role. On the Iberian Peninsula, Castile expanded to the south, taking with it enormous flocks of sheep. The shortest route for the resulting wool to reach the Netherlands was by taking ship from Basque ports. In the race towards Asia, Portugal rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope and Castile "discovered" America. And Basque ships sailed right the way around the world.



Galleons were the flagships of the Spanish Armada. Floating fortresses designed to transport precious metals, they represented the pinnacle of naval engineering achievement. Many of these vessels were constructed in Basque shipyards. Furthermore, many of the improvements made to their design and functionality were thought up by seafarers from Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia.

## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

The items displayed in museums are often referred to as "pieces" because the objects in question are rarely whole artefacts, and often lack the whole series of parts required to enable us to understand exactly how they were made and what they were used for. Also, when the original object is very large, or when it has not survived down the centuries (as is often the case with ships), providing they are historically accurate, models or other kinds of representations may help us understand what the originals would have been like. They may even, on occasions, be more useful and instructive than the original itself, since their scaled-down size gives us a better idea of the nature of the whole article. This is why many models acquire the well-deserved title "museum pieces", i.e. they become a part of our heritage that is just as respectable as the originals they represent.

## BASQUE ART AND BASQUE SOCIETY

In the “100 years of Basque art” room

### CONTEXT

Up until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Basque art as such did not exist. All we had were artists who worked in the Basque Country as members of the major artistic trends, whose main hubs were located elsewhere, in Rome, Paris, Seville and the Netherlands, etc.

Indeed, for centuries, only the Church ever commissioned works of art, and in the Basque Country these works were no different from those it commissioned in other parts of the world. With the emergence of a new class of customer, the bourgeoisie, a new type of art emerged which responded to new demands and tastes. In the Basque Country this was reflected in a proliferation of Basque motifs: landscapes, traditions and typical figures, etc.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

It is interesting to note that the middle classes did not want art to reflect their industrial, urban lifestyle, and much less the harsh conditions endured by the working classes. They preferred scenes of an idealised world. Consequently, although the paintings they bought featured *baserritarras* (farmers) and *arrantzales* (fishermen), these figures were not shown carrying out backbreaking work in the fields or at sea. Rather, they were painted as “characteristic figures of the earth” in bucolic, often festive environments which were “free” from smoking chimneys and mine carts.



The woman in the picture is carrying water on her head back to her farmhouse. One would never know, just by looking at her, that her job was a gruelling one (just try carrying several kilos on your head for miles). It is hard for us to even image what it must have been like to live in a house with no running water.

### ... TO EXHIBIT

“Jon doing a handstand” by the artist from San Sebastián, Andrés Nagel, is a good example of what is known as “artistic liberty”.

The figure of the boy, standing upside-down on just one hand, defies gravity.

Moreover, he is supported only by a cardboard box, a detail which only adds to the sensation of instability.

The artist is not affiliated to any specific school or group.

He is Basque, and he has chosen to give the piece a title in the Basque language.

But the work itself is not characterised by its “Basque nature”; it could have been made and exhibited anywhere.

The artist acknowledges that he was influenced by Chillida, but he has also learned from many others in many other places. He does not use his work to express any kind of social, economic, national or cultural identity.

He is a multifaceted artist who is interested only in the result; and to achieve it, he uses whatever is required. He does not specialise in any specific technique.



## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

As in the other collections, the works of art exhibited here have a value beyond their mere aesthetic or “artistic” worth. Indeed, even the fact of being a purely personal work, as is the case here, is a peculiarity of a specific society - our society. Furthermore, many objects we consider to be ethnographic or historical pieces are in fact of great aesthetic and artistic value. As a museum of society, San Telmo strives to move beyond conventional classifications and offer a more holistic vision.

And it does not limit itself to showcasing only the heritage that is preserved within its walls.

For example, it displays another work by Nagel in situ, so to speak, on the roundabout outside the city’s university campus. The same can be said of other works by artists such as

Oteiza, Chillida and Basterretxea, among others. You can locate all these pieces in the “Atlas of sculptures around the city”, available on the museum’s website: [www.santelmomuseoa.org](http://www.santelmomuseoa.org).

## FROM TOWNS TO THE CITY

In the “Living in society” area

### CONTEXT

In Europe and America at least, the pillars of our modern-day way of life, be they political (equality before the law, parliamentarianism by universal suffrage, political parties, separation of powers, etc.), social (rise of the middle classes and emergence of the proletariat instead of the feudal system), economic (industrialisation) or cultural (urban world, literacy, new art forms, etc.), were established during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the French revolution. It was a long, complicated process which underwent many setbacks, including violent ones, because large-scale changes often only came about after wars or revolutions. In Spain, the fight between the Ancien Régime and Liberalism manifested itself in the form of a dynastic struggle (known as “Carlism”), and in the Basque Country, this was further characterised by the controversy over whether to maintain or modify the sets of historical rights and privileges to which each province was subject.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

Station clock: a well-known, common, everyday object. Nothing special. Except that it represents a new way of looking at time. The obsession that we have nowadays with measuring time right down to the very last millisecond began during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with the industrial revolution and novel means of transport.



History books tend to pay little attention to these changes, which did not take the form of wars, battles or institutional declarations of events happening on a specific date. But this does not make them less important, especially if we are trying to understand the deeprooted change in society that took place during this period.

### ... TO EXHIBIT

Despite being rather faded, this white and red shirt of the Athletic football team attracts a lot of visitors and poses a very interesting question: although it is displayed as an example of the growing importance of popular sport during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is it not indicative of a certain degree of fetishism? As an object in and of itself, it is not particularly

valuable and indeed, if it were merely a shirt from 70 years ago it would not even be considered worth exhibiting. But these colours are capable of exciting a strong emotional response...



## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

History, or in other words, the evolution of humanity over time, can be charted in many different ways. The most “classical” method, which to a large extent remains the most popular method even today, is to focus on large-scale conflicts and political events as the drivers of change. Although the renewed museum continues to focus somewhat on this aspect of history, because it is vital to understanding many things, it also strives to show the other facets of life that reflect the tensions and changes occurring in society, right up to the present day. It is impossible to gain a true understanding of our modern, largely urban way of life without taking into account the concept of “free time” and its consequences in the form of leisure, tourism and sport. It was this concept that brought about the “democratisation of luxury”. Having free time itself became a luxury, since it was a counterpoint to the time spent working, and the Basque Coast became a shining example of the new leisure culture. A museum of society cannot afford to overlook all of this.

## LIVING OFF THE LAND

In the “Tradition survives” area

### CONTEXT

The world often referred to as the traditional world, i.e. the world in which knowledge and values are transmitted mainly by oral means, did not escape the effects of the widespread changes that occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But it did change at its own rate, in its own way and in its own interests. The farmhouse continued to be a family-run agricultural and livestock smallholding based around a house and a piece of land handed down from father to son. However, since the price of bread and wine dropped drastically with the advent of railway transportation, farms began producing less and less wheat and cider for their own consumption, and more and more vegetables and milk for selling on the growing urban market. Mechanisation also made life much easier. Today there are far fewer farmhouses, but those that have survived continue to be family-run businesses, although nowadays they tend to specialise in specific produce.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

Optimisation of resources, i.e. making the most of what is available in one's immediate environment, is basically what the rural world has been doing from the dawn of time.

Despite its apparent simplicity, the *kaiku* (milk bowl) is an extraordinary example of ergonomics, functionality and economy. This typical Basque recipient is made from a single piece of wood. Since there are no joints, it is tougher and harder to break and can therefore be used for more strenuous jobs. Its ergonomic design also makes it fairly multifunctional. Designed to help farmers milk their sheep more comfortably, its upward-facing handle enables milk to be transported smoothly and without spilling, and be poured easily into whatever recipient necessary. It can also be used directly for making junket, by boiling the milk using red hot stones. Although its unusual shape draws our attention today, it is not decorated in any way because it was primarily a work instrument.

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## ... TO EXHIBIT

In the days in which all linen was basically “bed linen”, chests were more convenient than wardrobes. They were not only used for linen and clothes, however; cereals, pulses and even salted meat were all kept in chests. Nevertheless, those designed to hold clothes and linen were often elaborately decorated, since they were used to transport the bride’s trousseau, which she would have spent years preparing. The more ornate the decorations, the wealthier the owners. In addition to their practical purpose, these “*kutxas*” or chests were also imbued with intense symbolic meaning. We often find the same motifs as on steles and *argizaiolas*, although here they tend to be more developed, sometimes even depicting whole scenes, since the artist had a larger space in which to work.



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## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

Like any other living institution, museums reflect the society of which they form part.

Between the foundation of the Municipal Museum in 1902 and its transfer to San Telmo in 1932, the museum staff collected tokens of a rural world which was undergoing a process of profound transformation. Consequently, in addition to works of art and historical artefacts (mainly weapons), extensive ethnographic collections were also established. Nevertheless, hardly any industrial objects were collected, since these items were not considered part of our “heritage”. Also, like today, not everyone was of the same mind, and there were some who believed that, rather than being rich sources of heritage, farmhouses contained nothing but “old rubbish”.

Obviously, and as you will see in the next room, neither of these attitudes have survived the test of time. Thus, in addition to its extensive ethnographic collection, San Telmo now also contains exhibits which represent the Basque Country’s important industrial tradition.

## OTHER JOBS, OTHER LIVES

In the “Industry, the driving force behind change” room

### CONTEXT

In the Basque Country, industrialisation began during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was almost exclusively limited to just two of the provinces.

In Bizkaia, the main driving force behind industrial development was the iron and steel industry, ranging from the mines themselves to the blast furnaces. The maritime industry arose in response to the need to export iron to England and to import coal. The Bilbao estuary and mining areas underwent a drastic process of transformation, while the rest of the province remained fairly rural.

In Gipuzkoa, industry was characterised by much smaller factories that were more evenly distributed, both geographically and in relation to the goods they produced: paper in the Tolosa region, cement on the coast, railway parts in Goierri, weapons in Eibar, locks in Mondragón, cotton in Bergara and porcelain in Oarso-Bidasoa, etc.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

This filing machine from the “Patricio Echeverria” factory in Legazpi illustrates two important facets of Basque industrial development.

Firstly, it shows how iron remained the region’s principal economic driver (the Basque Country became a leading manufacturer of tools).

And secondly, closely linked to the previous facet, it clearly illustrates one of the basic pillars of Basque industry, both past and present: machine-tool manufacturing.





Machines like this one were used to do piecework, i.e. wages were paid in relation to the number of parts produced, rather than the number of hours worked. In practical terms, this meant that production minimums became increasingly demanding.

## ... TO EXHIBIT

Industry did not result in the disappearance of craftwork, but rather its evolution. Indeed, the lines dividing these two forms of manufacturing is sometimes a little blurred: from a situation in which one person completed the entire process, craftwork became a series of specialist manual tasks carried out within a production chain. A good example of this is espadrille making. Machines were gradually incorporated into the different production phases and many professions either reinvented themselves or disappeared altogether.

Eibar is an excellent example of this evolution - its small weapons workshops gradually developed into large bicycle or sewing machine factories.

However, there will always be crafts and professions that cannot be totally mechanised and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between craftwork and art. This is the case of the “applied arts”. In the Basque Country, the damascene work carried out in Eibar requires a deft combination of technique, skill and taste to inlay gold into iron.



## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

A museum does not just collect objects or artefacts. It also gathers and displays anything that can help us understand the context in which those objects or artefacts were made and used: documents, photographs, related items, etc. This is why reproductions of workshops, kitchens or other complete environments are exhibited along with

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the museum pieces themselves. But it is difficult to “tell the whole story”, and a choice has to be made as to what information to include.

In the case of the filing machine, if visitors are not told about the unseen context, such as, for example, that the operators of these machines were almost always women, then they might jump to the erroneous conclusion that paid work outside the home was a mainly masculine affair, as Franco’s regime so staunchly maintained. Not providing this piece of information alongside the filing machine would help perpetuate women’s “historical invisibility”, relegating them to their “traditional” role.

In the case of the damascene work, it would be an oversight not to explain that the profession arose in connection with luxury weapon manufacturing, an industry from which it later branched off. Visitors will also gain a better understanding of the work of the Eibarborn artist Ignacio Zuloaga if they are told that he came from a family of damascene craftsmen.

## WE ARE ALL MUSEUM PIECES

In the “Rowdy generation” area

### CONTEXT

Following a brutal civil war and a bleak post-war period, and in the midst of an iron-fisted dictatorship, the country gradually moved away from the disastrous autarkic model towards “developmentalism”. This change manifested itself in fast economic growth in those areas of Spain which were already industrialised before the Civil War, namely Catalonia and the Basque Country. Soon, however, this change brought with it problems of overcrowding and pollution, alongside uncontrolled urban sprawl, as waves of migrant families arrived from all over inland Spain. All economic changes have social and cultural consequences, and these consequences soon began to manifest themselves in a growing anti-Franco sentiment.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

More than the transport revolution itself, the bicycle and motorbike in the room dedicated to industrialisation are there to illustrate the drastic change that took place both in society and at the heart of family life. The principal symbol of this change, however, is the car. In Italy it was the FIAT 500, in France the Renault 4 and, predating all of them, in Germany it was the Volkswagen Beetle (Volkswagen literally means “people’s car”). In Spain, a country with no political or union rights or liberties that had only just recovered from the post-war depression, the SEAT 600 symbolised a breaking away from the previously generation. It gave the working class freedom of movement and a sense of “progress”, all as part of a new, more urban, more comfortable lifestyle based on a stable job that enabled employees to take out loans (not just for houses, but for cars and even electrical appliances also, all of which could be paid for in instalments), go on holiday and, above all, enjoy a sense of ownership.



## ... TO EXHIBIT

In the Basque Country, the desire for freedom manifested itself in cultural expressions that, while rooted in tradition, nevertheless created something new. This was especially patent in the normalisation of the Basque language and in the fields of sculpture and singing. Mikel Laboa was one of the foremost musicians of his time. He remains highly respected by later generations, although (or perhaps because) at the beginning he was harshly criticised for "ruining tradition". Nowadays, the criticism levelled at him no longer makes sense and his work has enjoyed a revival, particularly since his death.



His widow has lent the museum his guitar so that it can be displayed for a number of years.

Although it is a privately-owned object, it is nevertheless part of our heritage, since it tells new generations of Basques or visitors from other parts of the world about the importance of a movement which sought to breath new life into Basque language and culture.

## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

How long does it take for an object to become a "museum piece"? The older an object is, the more valuable it is generally held to be. But value in museum terms cannot be measured mathematically. An old object is usually valuable because it is one of the few things that has survived from its era; it is not valuable simply because it is old. If a museum does not collect those objects which represent our present and our immediate past, then in the future it

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may not have the opportunity to exhibit what was most significant about our era, but rather only that which has survived the passage of time.

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## THE MUSEUM ITSELF IS ALSO A MUSEUM PIECE

In the lower cloister, next to the tower

### CONTEXT

How is a museum born? We generally use the name “museum” to refer to a building which houses part of our collective heritage. But first and foremost, a museum is an institution responsible for managing heritage, and what is primarily required is a collective desire to safeguard heritage for future generations in the form of specific objects housed in a building that may also, in certain cases, have its own cultural and historical value. San Telmo was the Basque Country’s first museum. It was founded in 1902, although the collection was not housed in the current building until 1932, when it was moved into the old monastery and adopted its name. Before being turned into a museum, the monastery was restored, a process which culminated in its being declared an historic monument.

### FROM EXHIBIT...

This magnificent cloister was built during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In Gipuzkoa there is only one other built in the same renaissance style; it is located in the Old University building in Oñati, now an archive. The cloister is an impressive indication of the wealth and power of the couple who founded the monastery, since during that period it was a mark of luxury to dedicate so much space to no practical use within the cramped walled precinct of a medieval town. We should also remember that, in practice, it was used and enjoyed by only a few dozen monks.

Now that it has been declared an historic monument, the local institutions strive both to ensure its conservation and to guarantee that it remains open to the general public. This is why it is classed as “heritage”.



## ... TO EXHIBIT

21<sup>st</sup> century society is not organised in accordance with a religious view of the world. Hardly any churches or monasteries are built any more. The new San Telmo building was designed as a cultural facility (a relatively new concept) at the service of both current and future society. It reflects our values and concerns: it is integrated into its natural and urban environment (vegetation, volume, etc.), it is eco-friendly (the façade is made from aluminium, which is one hundred percent recyclable), and it protects the historic monument from the dampness of the mountain and makes it more accessible.



## THE MUSEUM SPEAKS

Turning an historic building into a museum has a lot of advantages, but it also poses a number of technical problems. For instance, it is not easy to adapt certain areas, originally designed for other purposes, to new uses, especially as regards the strict lighting, humidity, temperature and accessibility criteria which must be adhered to. And of course, in a protected building there are certain things you simply cannot do, such as drill holes in or knock down walls, cover up original elements (tiles, pictures, etc.) or add new ones. You have to respect the original room sizes and restore the original materials, even though it would sometimes be cheaper to use new ones.

On the other hand, though, it is not unusual for the building itself to become the museum's principal "piece", even to the extent that it sometimes overshadows the collection itself.

This is why the delicate balance achieved at the San Telmo Museum between old and new, content and container, is quite extraordinary.