

October 2012

## ARTIUM

**Basque** Centre-Museum of Contemporary Art  
Vitoria-Gasteiz  
[www.artium.org](http://www.artium.org)



### **Pull the thread project. Three exhibitions from the ARTIUM Collection**

#### ***Visceral soul***

Lower East Gallery

Curator: Daniel Castillejo

#### ***Mirror image***

South Gallery

Curator: Enrique Martínez Goikoetxea

#### ***Montage of attractions***

North Gallery

Curator: Blanca de la Torre

#### **Inauguration: Friday, October 6, 8 PM Exhibitions produced by ARTIUM (Vitoria-Gasteiz)**

**Sponsored by:** Provincial Council of Alava, Basque Government, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Hall, Ministry of Culture, as well as the Vital Kutxa Bank, El Correo, Euskaltel and Naturgas Energia

With the collaboration of: Jorge Oteiza Foundation (Alzuza, Navarra)

Activities: exclusive pre-inaugural visit for associate members (Friday, October 5, 6:); tribute to the promoters of the ARTIUM Collection (Friday, October 5 8 PM); roundtable *La fuerza de una colección* with Carlos Urroz, Soledad Lorenzo, Pedro Sancristóval and Daniel Castillejo (Saturday, October 6, 12:30 PM); special Kids' workshop Guernica (Sunday, October 7 12 PM); free guided visits (Saturday, October 6 11:30 AM and Sunday, October 7 12:30 PM)

Saturday, October 6 and Sunday, October 7 (inaugural weekend) entrance with *You decide* tariff

#### **More information**



Because, what do these more than 3000 objects have in common? They are so different from each other, so complex, hurtful, ironic on occasions, on other occasions silent, on others garish... Theories based on aesthetics, social sciences and philosophy, but mainly on the world of art itself, have tried to respond to this question Through 3 interconnected exhibitions, *Pull the thread* offers a multiple approach to work represents the aim of the artistic process, of art.

From the *Pull the thread* project brochure



ARTIUM presents the project *Pull the thread*, three simultaneous exhibitions of the ARTIUM Collection, organised on the occasion of the centre-museum's tenth anniversary

*The link between the three exhibitions, Visceral soul, Mirror Image and Montage of attractions, which set out to examine the artistic process, is the work by Jorge Oteiza Homenaje a Velázquez*

ARTIUM, Basque Centre-Museum of Contemporary Art celebrates its first ten years of existence with the presentation of the *Pull the thread* project, consisting of three large exhibitions taken from the ARTIUM Collection. The exhibitions deal with three major themes in the art world, namely, the human being, the social and political environment in which he evolves, and art that looks at art. *These three subjects are dealt with, respectively, by Visceral soul*, curated by Daniel Castillejo, *Montage of attractions*, conceived and produced by Blanca de la Torre, and *Mirror image*, a proposal by Enrique Martínez Goikoetxea. Through the ARTIUM Collection, the three contrasting exhibitions provide an overall, exhaustive image of contemporary art. The *Pull the thread project is produced by ARTIUM* (Vitoria-Gasteiz), with the sponsorship of the Provincial Council of Alava, the Basque Government, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Hall, the Ministry of Culture, and the Vital Kutxa Bank, El Correo, Euskaltel and Naturgas Energia.

*Pull the thread* is a project of the ARTIUM Collection to commemorate the museum's 10th anniversary. Begun almost 4 decades ago, the collection has consolidated a diverse look at the art of our immediate cultural context, ranging from the avant-garde movements dating from before the Civil War to the present day. The artistic proposals developed in Spain and, in particular, in the Basque Country and in the province of Alava, have been the main focus of the contemporary art collection begun by the Provincial Council of Alava since the 1970s. Together with the acquisition and addition of a large number of international art works that have been deposited over the last 10 years, this collection allows a coherent reading of the complex situation of contemporary art, from modernity to our own days.

Through three interconnected exhibitions, *Pull the thread* offers a multiple approach to what represents the aim of the artistic process, of art. In these three cases, each exhibition begins with an identical work by the artist, Jorge Oteiza, *Homenaje a Velázquez*, a determinant piece in the effective development of this artist, born in Orio, representing the culmination of the "experimental proposal", a study of the relationship between vacuum and matter, the space of what is sacred and human. This piece combines artistic praxis and the conceptual aspect of his work, aesthetic and linguistic research, the humanist commitment to the social and political implications for his immediate context. The Jorge Oteiza Foundation, in Alzuza, Navarra, has taken part in the project with the loan of two studies for this piece. These, together with the one purchased by the museum from the artist in 1984, allows us to present, paradoxically, the same work in the three galleries. Having the same starting point, the three different exhibitions provide, with works from the ARTIUM Collection, an overall and exhaustive image of contemporary art.

The thesis of the exhibition is based on the idea that the main objectives of the discourses of art are oriented in three directions, which, in short, embrace the complexity of artistic practices. In the first place, those discourses that set out to deal with the world, external environments, where politics and social issues act in a scenario that determines us definitively and where art is expressed critically or at least confirms this. The exhibition, *Montage of attractions*, attempts to tackle these issues. This exhibition adopts the cinema as reference, establishing a number of parallels between the staging of an exhibition and film editing, in order to develop a story used to review the ARTIUM collection (in a partially or deliberately subjective manner) in its socio-political aspects, with all the contradictions and complexities these might involve.

On a secondary level, these practices become introspective in an attempt to respond in many different ways to the continuous questions that human beings make about themselves. *Visceral soul* is the exhibition that arises from these questions. The exhibition represents a journey towards the interior of the person, to the dark and transgressive side of human nature. Finally, the third direction analysed is art that refers to art. This self-reference, which is so apparent throughout the history of art, seeks to propose these premises that, based on aesthetics and philosophy, construct and articulate the complex existence of art itself. *Mirror image* seeks to delve into these reasons and therefore focuses on the needs of art to analyse itself in an effort of self-regulation, knowledge and reference. The concept of the autonomy of art, art for art's sake, which began with the idealistic aesthetic, has become one of its basic premises throughout the modernity period and is still in force today. The exhibition echoes the dissection that art makes of its own history, of the role of the artist, his context and functions.

***The mirror image. Art for art's sake.***

*The mirror image* examines the works contained in the ARTIUM collection from the viewpoint of art experimentation, the development of artistic languages and self reference attitudes in the history of art. The origin of "art for art's sake" can be found in the aesthetics of idealism, which defends the autonomy of the world of ideas as a form of knowledge. Throughout the 20th century, from the first avant-garde



movements until the present day, a large number of artistic practices have been based on a direct dialogue with art, in a form of interaction with its history and language, underlining its distancing from other didactic, moral or utilitarian functions.

The work *Homenaje a Velázquez* by Jorge Oteiza, made in 1957, takes an impassioned look at a complex structure of quotations, references, tributes and manifestoes, which, by pulling the thread, reveal the continuous break-ups and evolutions that the art system has undergone over the last 100 years. Splices, stitches that highlight the value the renewal attitudes of Spanish art during the dictatorship, link together experiments on matter and gesture, giving rise to abstraction as the main tool of renovation. This way was interpreted by many people as a process that distanced art from the reality of the world, to be defined from a political sense, devoid of ideology. Without this being the case at any moment in the strict sense, art for art's sake built a space of creative liberty in a period of tight cultural and social constraints. The artists included in this exhibition applied themselves completely to the language of art and the relevance of the medium, but show openly critical and analytical attitudes both towards the phenomenon of art and its effect on life.

The mechanisms of representation turned on themselves during the first period and the perception and interpretation of art and its context represent the main field of analysis as of the 1970s. The project highlights the work of artists who maintained the value of the language but pointed out the cracks of modern objectivity, adding layers of subjectivity and epidermis in their analysis. The crisis of discourses and values during the last decades of the century also involve an acid, critical look at the object. What transforms this into a work of art and white makes its author an artist and, especially, what makes sense of this effort? Not without a sense of melancholy, this kind of reflection will be dealt with through criticism but also through parody and irony. In the same way, there are many artists who take a look at the history of art. Killing one's father, in the Freudian sense, would be a common attitude that blends adoration with the frontal positioning to previous approaches. The search for a solution to the post-modernity crisis is reflected in many cases through eclecticism, reference, appropriationism, and the analysis of the codes used until then. The dilemma of originality and authorship was brought to the fore, pointing out the sociological aspects of artistic practice.

The exhibition leads us to familiar spaces of art with a *déjà vu* sensation in which recognition coexists with suspicion. Art turns on itself to theorise about its nature and to speculate about its mysteries, creating an archive of creative mechanisms and elements. The exhibition concludes with several proposals that examine the boundaries of this process, its institutions, agents and obligations, pausing in our immediate cultural context, which, due to its proximity, gives this analysis a special meaning.

### ***Montage of attractions***

This particular exhibition adopts the cinema as reference, establishing a number of parallels between the staging of an exhibition and film editing, in order to develop a story with approximations to the world of film, based on which an attempt is made to review the ARTIUM collection (in a partially or deliberately subjective manner) in its socio-political aspects, with all the contradictions and complexities these might involve.

The title is taken from the type of montage developed by Serguei Eisenstein, one of the key names associated with the Soviet school of the 1920s and 30s, that saw the cinema as the kind of intellectual and dielectric construction and attempted to allude ironically to the inclusion of art within the realm of show business and the entertainment industry.

Eisenstein argued in favour of dialectic film, less as a representation than as an articulated discourse. Basically it involves taking two, apparently unrelated ideas and joining these together to obtain an ideological connotation and symbolism.

After examining the *Homenaje a Velázquez* by Jorge Oteiza as the starting point, the next landmark is the artist's own archive that will contain material from his frustrated film *Acteón*. Oteiza, who considered the cinema to be a fundamental subject for study in the aesthetic education of man, embarked on the film project to pursue the spectator, which also refers us to ideas relating to the medium of Brecht and Eisenstein, in his attempt to "extract people from their self absorption in order to make them abandon their passive attitude as a mere receiver of stories and to make them take part in a work that does not exist without their active presence".

As of that point, there are a series of works that reflect upon political-social aspects and the impossibility of representing these. The exhibition is based in every moment on an approach from the realm of micropolitics in order to try to generate a scenario of aesthetic research.

Within the realm of form, the proposal is full of references to the world of filmmaking, not only because of those references that can contain the pieces themselves (frames, "artistic *fou*", *split-screen*...), but also in the use of resources such as the *ellipsis and off field*-including pieces outside the exhibition space-, *flash backs*-introducing works of artists who occupied the same gallery in the previous exhibition -, as well as *flash forwards, motifs and jump cuts*.

The rhythm will change from the first sequences in which an allusion to filmmaking in a much more literal sense is sought, as they deal with the construction of identities from situations that show postcolonial and Eurocentric attitudes, to the violence of the domestic and social scene, including the problems of exploitation, terrorism, armed violence and military conflicts. Music is also established in a number of pieces as a weapon to channel these themes, and works like a kind of metaphor, like the soundtrack of a story with clear, dystopian overtones and an overwhelmingly pessimistic cynicism. To sum up, just like Oteiza's film, the exhibition attempts to overcome the distinction

between what occurs and what is explained, and its narrative layout, just like in *Acteón*, is a trap so that what might happen happens to the spectator.

### **Visceral soul**

As its name indicates, *Visceral soul* is nothing more than a metaphor of the capacity of human beings to generate arguments for survival in the whirlwind of life in order to continue forward to the end.

There nothing more natural in human beings than to verify their own objectuality and, especially, establish an intense and permanent dialogue between present life and certain death, which in other terms is called the philosophy of transcendence. *Visceral soul* is based on the conviction that art is also a medium that allows creators and artists to express their interest in themselves in every way possible. Fears, questions, introspection, doubts, the desire for transcendence, the meaning of their mere presence in the world, all of these occupy an essential space in the discourses of art.

This exhibition, as those described above, start with the piece by Oteiza, *Homenaje a Velázquez* of 1958, in which the metaphysics of the artist are shown starkly with his verification of the three dimensions and of a fourth dimension installed in that interior vacuum. This piece opens a space in the exhibition called *El Útero*, the beginning of everything, from which a series of works begin to emerge, pulling on the thread, that are interpreted in terms of birth and the acquisition of understanding and of the inner consciousness of human beings.

The montage, which contains a large number of works of all types, techniques, styles and epochs, spins a yarn in which the visitor travels through the different allusions to concepts that relate directly to the poetic reflections of the inner universe.

In this way, there is a succession of ambits such as *El salto* –in which human beings acquire consciousness-, *El doble* -in which the other and the difference appear-, *Lo líquido* -understood as the life fluid-, *El adentro* -that speaks of consciousness and viscera-, *La relación* -in which the family and socialisation are expressed-, *La cabeza* and *La confusión* -as intimate links of mediated looks-and finally *La pregunta* - which places us in abstraction, the sign and transcendence.

### Exhibitions at ARTIUM

- ✓ *Pull the thread* project ARTIUM Collection
- ✓ *Montage of attractions*
- ✓ *Visceral soul*
- ✓ *The mirror image.*
- ✓ *And you, what do you collect?* Pedagogic exhibition (until June 29)
- ✓ *ARTIUM (2002-2012): graphical and documentary report.* Biographical exhibition (until April 1)
- ✓ Praxis. Beatriz Olabarrieta (coming soon)

### Opening hours of the Centre-Museum

Tuesdays to Fridays: From 11 AM to 2 PM and from 5 PM to 8 PM

Saturdays, Sundays and holidays: from 11 AM to 9 PM, without interruption

Mondays closed (unless this coincides with a public holiday)

**General ticket price:** 6 €

#### You Decide Tariff\*:

- Every Wednesday throughout the year.
- Weekend following the inauguration of an exhibition.
- Students, unemployed persons, pensioners and children of under 14.

\***You Decide** Tariff: You decide whether you pay and how much. Your contributions will be used to develop the programmes and activities of the Centre-Museum.

**Annual season ticket:** 10 €

Allows visitors to see all the exhibitions on show for one year as of the purchase date.

### Library and Documentation Centre Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: From 11 AM to 2 PM and from 4 PM to 7:30 PM

Saturdays from 10 AM to 2 PM

Sundays, closed

Free entry