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Cover Page Footnote

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Bringing 'New Wind' to the Rural Interior of the French Basque Country: The Association 'Haize Berri' and the Politics of Culture

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Introduction

This article looks at *Haize Berri*, a cultural association active in the rural French Basque Country from the 1980s to 2009, to reflect on the different understandings of art and culture and their political implications in the particular political context of this region. *Haize Berri*, whose name means 'New Wind' in *Euskara* (the Basque language), had the ambition of bringing culture and art to the rural inland of the French Basque Country. It was innovative in offering the area's population a rich array of artistic and social initiatives. Thanks to the participation of some prominent figures in the art world of the Basque Country, *Haize Berri* was at the heart of a cultural renaissance in the region and it came to be known well beyond its locality.

However, both despite and because of these successes, *Haize Berri* was also the focus of local political controversy. The founders of *Haize Berri* had a Basque cultural agenda and saw themselves as a grass-roots organization, acting autonomously and independently of French state institutions. As such, it disturbed the local political establishment and became a source of disputes relating to local identity politics and culture. The case of *Haize Berri* serves as a lens through which to explore the politics of culture and the role of the creative arts in collective identity boundary drawing, particularly in the context of the Basque Country, marked by conflict over different definitions of national and regional identity and belonging.

As I have mentioned in other publications (Bray 2006b, Bray 2012) nationalism is not only a political project but also a social and cultural one. Competing concepts of nationalism and correspondingly different notions of identity create an environment in which anything may have political significance. This is no exception with art. Special significance may be conferred on artistic production as an element of national identity. Since identity is a contested and ever-evolving concept, different social and political factions in a politically contested region appreciate different artworks and artists in different ways (Van Laar and Diepeveen 1998; Gell 2009). This is also very much the case for Basque identity. While the importance given to art for Basque identity has been explored by scholars such as Guasch (1985), Arribas (1979) and MacClancy (1997), researchers have not hitherto focused to any great degree on how the different understandings of local, regional and national identity in the Basque Country clash

when it comes to defining and promoting art and culture. Furthermore, there is a lack of research looking at the particular case of the French Basque Country, quite a different context to that of the Basque region on the Spanish side of the Franco-Spanish state frontier, which tends to be the main focus of researchers when studying the Basque Country.

This article begins with a brief introduction to the cultural and political boundaries of nationalism in the Basque Country, and explains the particularities of the French side. I then introduce *Haize Berri*, describing some of its activities in the context of local social and political dynamics. The article draws some conclusions about the specific importance *Haize Berri* gave to 'culture' and 'art', and on the role of art and culture in the context of identity politics.

The Social and Political Context of *Haize Berri*

Over the course of the 20th century, the combination of French centralizing policies and rural economic decline led to decreasing use of Euskara, the Basque language, in the French Basque Country, henceforth referred to as the Pays Basque. People increasingly favored French over Euskara as the expression of the more prestigious French identity (Oronos 2002). Modernity was associated with a French-speaking elite, while Euskara was largely confined to the rural and traditional world and the private sphere. For most of this time, there was no concept of Basque modernity as a context within which the Basque language and a Basque identity could compete with French. Basque themes could be exploited as folklore but were deprived of political meaning.

Until the 1980s, mobilization in the Pays Basque was absorbed in the localistic form of politics known in France as *notabiliare*, based on the local implantation of political brokers and clientelistic networks (Bidart 1986). The notables included representatives of the church and the state, in the form of the priest, the municipal secretary, the schoolteacher, and elected deputies. Their role in these traditional networks was to mediate between the political center of power, in this case the seat of national government in Paris, and the locality of their power base, by bringing back a share of central resources (Jaureguiberry 1983). Administrative politics cut across historic and cultural boundaries: the Pays Basque forms part of a culturally diverse *département*, Pyrénées Atlantiques, which in turn is part of a larger and equally culturally arbitrary region, Aquitaine. In contrast with the predominantly industrial economy of the Spanish Basque Country, Euskadi, the Pays Basque has been more dependent on tourism and agriculture. A lack of educational infrastructures, combined with a relative paucity of job opportunities, has meant that a significant proportion of young people have had to leave the Pays Basque to study or find employment.

Modern Basque nationalism only emerged as a social and political force in the Pays Basque in the 1960s (Jacobs 1994). Much of its inspiration came from the Spanish side of the frontier, fuelled by the Basque militants who had fled Franco's Spain and taken refuge on the French side (Etcheverry-Ainchart 2013). The influence of these Spanish Basque dissidents on the political climate in the French Basque Country was limited, as they were often treated with suspicion by the majority of the local population who considered them negatively as Spanish, foreign and Communists (Jaureguiberry 1983; Izquierdo 2001). Some young people nonetheless began to reflect on their situation as part of a culturally and linguistically distinct area marginalized from

the rest of France, and to see the French government as deliberately keeping the Pays Basque in a state of "third worldishness" (Collins, 1986:212).

The first organized group of modern Basque nationalists in the Pays Basque was created in 1960 under the name of *Enbata*.¹ A few years later, following a model launched in the Spanish Basque Country over a decade earlier, a few parents wishing to give their children a Basque-language education opened an independent school, known in Basque as *ikastola*, and formed an association, *Seaska*, to provide funding and administrative support for it and help create more *ikastolak*.² In 1975, a group of Basque nationalist youths also set up *Iparretarrak*,³ a militant organization modeled on the violent Basque separatist organization ETA active in Spain since the 1960s. This group claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on French government offices and tourist trade initiatives. Their militant actions culminated in the early 1980s with a series of dramatic events involving the death of militants and police officials, as well as a few people mistaken as targets (Bidegain 2007). Tensions were increased by the actions of the secret Spanish paramilitary organization *GAL*,⁴ which engaged in shootings and assassinations of ETA activists on French territory.

At the same time, French governmental policies regarding the peripheral regions of the French state were changing under the presidency of François Mitterrand who had promised decentralization (Wangermee 1988). Actions were initiated to allow regional councils to exercise some degree of budgetary autonomy, in particular in the areas of local development and culture (Council of Europe 1991). However, this process of decentralization of the distribution of power followed formal channels that, in the Pays Basque, remained in the hands of the established elite (see also Bidart 1986).

As a result, grassroots Basque nationalists mobilized against the perceived internal colonialism of the French state in the Pays Basque (see also Collins 1986; Jacobs 1994). In their effort to resist this, they promoted local indigenous economic development. At village level, younger people with a budding Basque consciousness began organizing alternative networks, coordinating activities promoting Basque nationalism, and engaging in contacts with the Spanish Basque Country (Jacobs 1994). Breaking away from older militants seen as too old-fashioned, since concerned primarily with the preservation of Basque culture and language in terms of immutable traditions, they called instead for a focus on urban problems and the challenges faced by contemporary young people. They also adopted a strategy of non-cooperation with state military authorities that was thriving on the Spanish side of the frontier - *insumisoa*, the refusal by young men to fulfill national conscription requirements.

Until the 1990s, the local population was broadly divided between the minority involved in these various initiatives, often self-identified as *abertzaleak*, meaning Basque patriots in Euskara, and the majority, who believed all this was mere trouble-making and who favored a continued political and social order closely linked with the French institutional establishment.

¹ It was originally called *Embata* (see also Izquierdo, 2001:123)

² The suffix 'k' marks the plural in Basque.

³ *Iparretarrak* means 'Those of the North' in Basque.

⁴ *GAL* stands for *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*, which is Spanish for 'Antiterrorist Liberation Groups'. It was active between 1983 and 1987 thanks to the connivance of the French Socialist government with the Spanish Socialist government.

— Haize Berri à Ostabat : la vitrine des créateurs basques —

Confluent obligé des voies jacquaires, après avoir reçu tant de pèlerins dans ses «Priorenia», «Ospitalzahare» et autre «Ospitalia», cette «vallée de l'hospitalité» manifeste à présent son don de l'accueil dans le domaine des arts plastiques grâce aux efforts du centre culturel Haize berri et de son animateur Beñat Oteiza.

Depuis quatre ans, même, à Ostabat, l'initiative locale a reçu l'appui du très actif conservateur du musée de Guéthary et grand connaisseur de l'art contemporain, Jean-François Larralde, qui l'a orientée vers une plus grande professionnalisation et davantage de «continuité artistique».

Modernité de la préhistoire et disciples d'Oteiza

A l'unisson du festival d'Ixassou pour lequel il avait proposé le thème de «la modernité de la préhistoire», à Ostabat, Jean-François Larralde fait succéder d'une année à l'autre, au peintre renommé Jose Luis Zumeta, un autre Donostiar et disciple d'Oteiza, Juan Luis Goenaga !

Admirateur de l'art pariétal à Santimamiñe et Ekain, ce dernier n'hésitait pas à se retirer dans le Goierri pour être mieux à même de produire sur la toile une forme contemporaine de la créativité magdalénienne, à base de signes entrevus dans les grottes et selon une technique d'empâtement et de glacis dans une gamme assez sourde de coloris. Goenaga parrainera également le festival d'Ixassou et fera découvrir simultanément quelques œuvres supplémentaires dès la fin de la semaine à la galerie bayonnaise «Arbre», près de la

Michel Duboscq, «l'Annonciation».

cathédrale.

L'autre disciple d'Oteiza exposé à Haize berri est le sculpteur navarrais Jose Ramon Anda, qui combine une vision très esthétique - mais non limitée à un certain aspect «design» - d'objets pouvant paraître familiers avec une notion de l'espace chère à son maître et ami, dont il a d'ailleurs récemment matérialisé une maquette destinée à l'église San Vicente de Saint-Sébastien.

Les vents nouveaux de la créativité

Parmi la dizaine d'artistes sélectionnés dans cette vitrine de la création en Pays Basque intérieur, avec les œuvres de Goenaga et d'Anda voisinent celles de jeunes créateurs installés en Basse-Navarre. Particulièrement les sculptures de Guanes Etxegaray, à la rencontre de l'histoire avec l'art contemporain, et d'une certaine «ruralité» néanmoins tournée vers le futur ; l'église du

lieu accueille trois mosaïques du Guethariar Michel Duboscq, dont une, importante, consacrée à l'Annonciation, et les autres, parées de toutes les couleurs des oiseaux de la Création ; l'eau, le feu et la terre symbolisent la terre renouvelée chez Christiane Giraud alors que le Garaztar d'adoption Philippe Franzen projette ses mille couleurs au café Ametzanea et que Bruno Latxague investit le mur jusqu'à délaissé d'une maison proche, sans oublier l'Allemand Horst Schönberger, Piarres Erdozaincy ou le groupe Uztarro de Menditte, déjà apprécié à Ixassou, l'année dernière...

Alexandre de La Cerdà

Haize berri à Ostabat, jusqu'au 27 août, ouvert tous les jours de 14 h à 20 h ; ce vendredi 16 juillet, à 17 h marche-découverte d'Ostabat suivie à 21 h d'un spectacle d'extraits «d'Euskal Ispiritu» avec Pier-Paul Berzaitz. Tél. 05 59 37 85 79.

La Semaine du Pays Basque : "Showcase for Basque creators" (1999)

While the conservative majority entertained a notion of Basque identity that was fixed and unquestionable - one is Basque simply because one's ancestors are Basque -, the *abertzaleak* urged a more active approach to identity: one is Basque because one wants to be, irrespective of origins. For this group, the important thing is to speak Euskara and to identify with a Basque national project (Bray 2011; Bray 2006a). In this atmosphere, political engagement and individual expressions of identity were often strongly linked. As Xavier Gizard, who provided legal and institutional advice to set up *Haize Berri*, recalled: "If you were at all in favor of

developing Basque culture, or some kind of autonomous grassroots initiative, you were immediately tagged as Enbatiste, sometimes even as a terrorist".⁵ The same people tended to be involved in a range of Basque cultural initiatives, as Gabi Aguerre, for many years a member of the *Haize Berri* executive, recalls. "It was pretty much always the same people – those who were active in the *ikastolak* were also teaching Basque, or in alternative local development, the local radios, the new political movements".⁶ Much of the "trouble-making" perceived by the majority of the conservative local population was deemed to come from a foreign influence: the Spanish Basque Country, breeding ground of *abertzale* culture and of ETA.⁷

If *Haize Berri* was relegated by a large sector of public opinion to that camp, it was due to the involvement of its main founders in *abertzale* initiatives. Eñaut Larralde, the first president of *Haize Berri*, was a famous singer in the Basque Country, often performing alongside *Ez Dok Amairu*, a collective of singers and musicians who explored new musical expressions in Euskara in the Spanish Basque Country during the years of Franco's dictatorship. Amongst other grassroots initiatives, Eñaut had helped support the first *ikastola* in the area, marking a clear breach with the local custom of sending one's children to either a local French state school, or a school run by a Catholic religious organization. A self-identified *abertzale*, he was also suspected of sheltering individuals linked to ETA during the 1980s.⁸

Daniel Arbeletche, a co-founder of *Haize Berri*, and a subsequent president, was also an *ikastola* parent and an active participant in other grassroots initiatives in Euskara, as were most of the members of the executive board of *Haize Berri*. Later, José Perez, who was hired by *Haize Berri* to run its operations, was one of the first young men to benefit from the official status of conscientious objector by working for an association or social institution as an alternative to doing military service. He was a punk rock fan from the suburbs of the city of Bayonne, who had been brought up speaking French but had learnt Euskara as a condition of his employment. As such, he cut a peculiar figure in the rural environment of Izura. Through such challenges to local conservative social and political norms, *Haize Berri*, right from its early days was tainted as political.

Haize Berri

Haize Berri's birth as part of a general grassroots movement in favor of Basque identity coincided in the early 1980s with a shift in French institutional policies to support limited local development initiatives (Oronos 2002; Itçaina 2010). After long negotiations, Basque activists had succeeded in 1984 in setting up a cultural center for the Pays Basque, called the *Centre Culturel du Pays Basque* (CCPB). This had the institutional role of advising on Basque cultural policy-making and re-deploying state and regional funds to the area. Under a special institutional contract called the *Contrat de Pays*, funds were to be redistributed locally to spend on cultural projects. Municipal councils and local associations were expected to work together to spend this money. In Basse Navarre (one of the three provinces which make up the Pays

⁵ Interview on the telephone, July 3 2012.

⁶ Interview on the telephone, July 3 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ This information was gathered from talking with various local inhabitants. The suspicion was later confirmed to be true. I choose here to retain the anonymity of these sources.

Basque), a group of individuals joined together to found *Haize Berri* as the cultural center for the area. In the neighboring provinces of Soule and Labourd, other associations, respectively named *Uhaitzea* and *Eihartzia*, were set up to serve as their cultural centers.

Haize Berri stood out amongst these three associations for the strong desire of its founders to work autonomously of institutions and to make the promotion of art one of its main objectives.

After much negotiation with local officials, the cultural center was finally launched in the village of Izura, or Ostabat, in 1983. Neighboring bigger municipalities had vied to have the cultural center in their own locality, attracted by its prospects as a source of funding, and had proposed other associations to set it up that were not connected with the *abertzale* movement. *Haize Berri* finally won the day thanks to a handful of local influential political arbitrators who were sympathetic to the *abertzale* cause, particularly from the CCPB.

While *Haize Berri* enjoyed institutional support under the umbrella of the *Contrat de Pays*, however, its beginning was not smooth. The municipal counselors of Izura did not welcome *Haize Berri* in their midst, associating its supporters with *abertzales* and *Enbata*.⁹ The mayor at the time is reported to have stated that he could not see the use of a cultural center in Izura.¹⁰ Indeed the idea of investing money and energy in ‘culture’ and ‘art’ was incomprehensible to many of the villagers for whom such things were quite foreign to their daily rural lives. Beyond their work, they were accustomed to social relations and leisure activities revolving around the church and its religious festivities, and the annual village fiestas, whose organization was left to the local youth.

On the day of the inauguration, the president of the CCPB, Ramuntxo Camblong, hailed *Haize Berri* as “a veritable decentralized antenna of Basque culture”.¹¹ However, the relationship between *Haize Berri* and the CCPB was fated to remain tense, as the CCPB, although favorable to the *abertzale* movement, tended to favor more centralized and mainstream Basque cultural activities.¹² By contrast, *Haize Berri* wished to retain autonomy of action, away from centralized control, and to support more local and popular cultural programs.¹³ Such center-periphery tensions are characteristic of the way culture is defined and promoted in France (Wangermeer,

⁹ Conversations with villagers (names withheld for anonymity), July 2012.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ In *Sud Ouest*, 1983, March 1, “*Haize Berri* ouvre ses portes” (*Haize Berri* opens its doors). My translation from French to English.

¹² Interviews with Pantxo Etchegoin, current director of the Basque Cultural Institute (the BCI is the successor organization to the CCPB), and Daniel Landart, former president of the BCI, both July 1 2013 at Chateau Lota, seat of BCI, Uztaritz. Interview with Txomin Heguy, also former president of the BCI, July 3 2013, at Bar des Pyrenees, Bayonne. Interview with Daniel Arbeletxe, December 28, 2012, at Bar Ametza, Izura. Interview with Marie-Jeanne Mercapide, former coordinator of *Haize Berri*, June 27 2013, at her home, Armañakenea, Izura.

¹³ *Résumé de la réunion du group de reflexion sur l’avenir d’Haize Berri (Gogoeta Taldea)*, 24 November 2000. *Résumé de la réunion du Conseil d’Administration d’Haize Berri*, 6 Juin 1997. In this meeting, the director of the BCI, Txomin Heguy, tried to convince *Haize Berri* of joining to join its activity with the neighboring group of municipalities, la *communauté de communes d’Amikuze*, and to focus on more blockbuster shows. Heguy is convinced that, within the institutional project to develop the Pays Basque, the rural area, which *Haize Berri* is concerned about “will be saved”. *Haize Berri* remains skeptical.

1988). The tension between CCPB and Haize Berri is also a good illustration of the kind of conflict that often emerges when one branch of the alternative movement begins to work with the blessing of the establishment, in this case, the CCPB with French institutions.

It is equally in this French context that it helps to understand how *Haize Berri* had an impact on the local, generally conservative population, and how this population reacted to it. Most of the inhabitants were used to politics being managed by more or less the same people, the various aforementioned notables, that is, those with the most formal education and connections beyond the locality (see also Bidart 1986 and Jaureguiberry 1983; Ott 1993).

From the outset, the board of *Haize Berri* sought to ensure its autonomy with respect to its programming. This meant having just 50% of its budget covered by institutional funding. Its main financial partner was the CCPB, which either granted the funds or helped it obtain funds elsewhere, especially from programs linked to the French Ministry of Culture or to the European Union. The other half of its budget came from donations, income from ticket sales of its shows and concerts, rental of its facilities and technical material, and from membership fees. *Haize Berri* also sometimes obtained funding for a specific project in collaboration with municipalities in Navarre or Euskadi, as well as from the autonomous Basque government of Euskadi.

As the name 'New Wind' suggests, the founders of *Haize Berri* sought to bring new life to the area. In the words of its pioneers, they wished to bring about a so-called "Basque cultural renaissance"¹⁴, and "to promote and develop Basque culture"¹⁵. They framed their motivation in terms of the "preservation and renaissance of our millenary culture" and the conviction that "our identity is a boon in global competition".¹⁶ "The whole area would benefit from the abundance of activities generated by the cultural center".¹⁷ And promoting their work in Euskara was repeatedly stated as a priority.¹⁸

Haize Berri embarked on its mission with a rich list of activities. It launched numerous creative projects, including concerts, theatrical productions, workshops and art exhibitions. *Haize Berri* made a point of trying to engage with the local population and get them to participate in its activities and contribute new ideas. *Haize Berri* also framed its raison d'être in the fact that Izura is at the crossroads of three pilgrimage routes leading to the famed tomb of Saint James in the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela.¹⁹ The paths merge in Izura and continue on, through the town of Donibane Garazi, into Navarre and on to Santiago de Compostela. From its beginnings, *Haize Berri* launched a series of activities celebrating Izura's particular historical profile, emphasizing the village's historical heritage as a crossroads of cultures and exchanges. The association regularly invited other communities located on the pilgrimage routes to exhibit artwork or to present dance and musical performances in Izura.

¹⁴ Eñaut Larralde quoted in *Sud Ouest*, 1983 March 1, "*Haize Berri* ouvre ses portes".

¹⁵ *Haize Berri* pamphlet 'Notre Proposition: Participez à notre Entreprise de Renaissance!', date not given, but estimated to be 1995.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Haize Berri* document '*Haize Berri Kultur Etxea. Centre culturel des cantons d'Amikuze et Iholdy. Avant Projet 2005*'. 2004 July 22. (Archive 2)

¹⁹ Ibid.

UDA ERAKUSKETA 1o : ARTEA, JALDI HADI PLAZARA !

Erakusketa deneri idekia, artegintza ez baita bakarrik aditu batzuen eremua, baina bakotzak, bere heinean, bere nortasunarekin, artisten obrak senditzen ahal ditu, momentu aberasgarri bat pasatuz.

Hortara, Izura, herria bera, bilakatu da, artegintza erakusketaren eremua. Hala nola, Haize Berri Kultur Etxearen gela bat, baina ere eliza, "Ametzanea" ostaturia eta herriaren karrikak, obrez beterik dira, lehengo bidegurutze nagusi honen bisitatzeko parada, baliatzen ahal delarik, momento berean.

Uda Erakusketa idekia, Uztailaren 02tik, Agorriaren 27a arte, arratsaldeko 2etatik, 8ak arte.

Philippe Franzen dont les peintures sont présentes dans la convivialité du café Ametzanea ne dit-il pas : "le regardeur spectateur a toute l'importance dans la mesure où sa propre vision refait différemment le tableau et lui donne un sens particulier." Michel Duboscq fonde ses mosaïques dans l'univers religieux de l'église; Uztaro, plasticien, joue avec la lumière à côté du dernier vestige des remparts du village; Hira Punta, plasticien montre une réalisation toute en transparence comme une ouverture sur d'autres mondes avec comme toile de fond la campagne basque; Christiane Gnaud, sculpteur, inscrit ces trois cercles symbolisant

l'eau, le feu et la terre : UR SU LUR entre relief du terrain et maisons; Bruno Laxague, peintre, tisse sa toile sur la façade d'une vieille maison; Piarres Erdozaintzi, sculpteur, crée "Lotura", objet mouvant au gré du vent comme pour être en prise, en lien (lotura en basque) avec les éléments de la nature;

Horst Schoenberger, plasticien, nous interpelle sur le sujet des Chemins de Saint-Jacques.

Enfin le plasticien Daniel Saroberry pose de simples mots dont le sens se trouve révélé par la proximité :

"douter" apposé à côté de l'église...

▲ Guanes Etchegaray est "artiste en résidence" à Ostabat. Sculpteur, il a été conquis par la thématique des "Chemins de Saint-Jacques". Délaissant son atelier, il a souhaité réaliser son imposante sculpture au milieu du village, comme pour mieux faire participer la population et créer le lien entre l'artiste et son public. L'inauguration de son oeuvre est prévu pour le 27 Août.

Loin des grandes villes et de leur hégémonie culturelle, Haize Berri et Ostabat prouvent ensemble que l'art en milieu rural peut rester simple et accessible à tous. Ne tardez pas! cette exposition éphémère et gratuite ne fermera sûrement pas ses portes, mais elle s'évanouira définitivement à la fin du mois d'Août.

Ouvert du 02 Juillet au 27 Août de 14 heures à 20 heures.

Pour tout renseignement : Centre Culturel Haize Berri Tél .05 59 37 85 79

Vies & Loisirs - Août 99

15

Summer Art Exhibit "Take art out to the plaza" (Aug. 1999)

Haize Berri also organized seminars on current social and political topics, which questioned locally established modes of thought and social relations, and reflected on new ways and philosophies of life and work. Guest speakers included representatives of the local workers' syndicate *Euskal Herriko Laborarien Elkarte*, members of Basque activist youth movements, and spokespersons of alternative farming methods and sustainable development. Contemporary dance and gym lessons were also offered to the general public, causing a sensation especially amongst the older male inhabitants as many for the first time saw women in tight lycra pants with their legs up in the air.²⁰

In the 1980s, *Haize Berri* also housed a local Basque-language radio station, at a time when this project was still in its infancy and the idea of Basque media, as opposed to the mainstream, was still controversial. It also organized sessions of improvised singing in rhyming verse (*bertsularitza*) in a non-traditional fashion: *Haize Berri* introduced a radical change to this custom of Basque improvised singing by bringing in cartoon artists who illustrated live the verses as they were sung on the spot. *Haize Berri* also organized an annual exhibition of humorous illustrations, *Marrazkiri*, around a theme of current affairs, which would often have political undertones. Another ambitious initiative was the organization of *Kantu Xapelketa*, a Basque singing competition which especially mobilized *ikastola* children and their parents (given they were the main ones to be sensitive to such an initiative involving the Basque language) across the Pays Basque. These were all pioneering activities in the emergence of a now fully established Basque national cultural scene.

Haize Berri also sought to work with local traditional village youth groups in charge of organizing the annual festivities in their villages. As *Haize Berri's* permanent member of staff in the early 1990s, José Perez helped launch a rock competition called *Iparrock* to encourage local rock bands to compose music in Euskara. Izura became a major rendez-vous for concerts in the new Basque punk rock scene. Revellers came from far and wide across the Basque Country. When they descended upon Izura, the motley group indulged in alcohol and drugs and very loud music and left the village in considerable disarray. Their behavior, appearance and attitude made an impression on Izura's citizens which was not exactly positive.²¹ Thus, in general, *Haize Berri's* dynamism both intrigued and disturbed.

Basque Art

Haize Berri became most famous across the Basque Country, however, for its work with visual art. In the Pays Basque, visual art as a medium of local cultural expression has played a minor role, and this, to a certain extent continues to be the case today. Artists in the Pays Basque have tended to be isolated figures, working in the privacy of their homes and keeping their artwork secondary to their prime professional occupation. Those who sought to assert themselves as professional artists have tended to leave home to work and live in other parts of France. Unlike the Spanish Basque Country, the Pays Basque offered few institutional opportunities to train and promote oneself as a fine artist. Only in very recent years has this begun to change with the

²⁰ Recollections based on interviews with former participants of these classes, July 2012, Izura.

²¹ Recollections of a variety of local inhabitants, July and August 2012 and July 2013, Izura. As a child during this time, I also remember local villagers, days after the festivities, expressing outrage at the dirty state in which their village had been left. I also remember these topics being great sources of gossip.

establishment of art schools on the French Basque urban coast. Traditional Basque culture has tended to revolve around singing and dancing, the practice of fine art being a more upper class activity. For this reason too, it has developed only slowly and recently. On the whole, cultural associations in the Pays Basque have focused their energies more on the development and promotion of music, dance and theatre.²²

The founders of *Haize Berri* became interested in fine art principally because of the passion of one of its members, Piarres Erdozaintzi, a local farmer who also practiced as a sculptor whenever he found the time, working mainly in wood and stone. He had learned to sculpt thanks to a local carpenter. Through Erdozaintzi's active participation in *Haize Berri*, the association sought to "be the showcase of creativity in the Pays Basque".²³ It began hosting annual summer exhibitions as from 1989, thereby becoming the first exhibitor of fine art in the rural interior of the Pays Basque.²⁴ At the start, the exhibitions displayed the work of approximately twenty local artists during the month of August. After a few years, as part of *Haize Berri's* ambition to reach a broader audience and to become more professional,²⁵ the organizers invited a wider variety of artists and of more established quality and renown. At the same time, they continued to believe in the importance of working with local artists, with the desire to "give the opportunity to local and beginner artists to exhibit and work with more established ones".²⁶ The aim was also "to make the local population more sensitive to art, especially to contemporary art, as an important part of culture".²⁷

In this vein, Izura-based artist Josette Dacosta was invited to exhibit her paintings of Basque houses during the summer of 1996. According to Benat Oteiza, who was then coordinator of *Haize Berri*, this was the first time that an exhibition by *Haize Berri* attracted so many of the village's inhabitants; they came regularly during opening hours and also to the inauguration and closing festivities. They came, according to Josette Dacosta and Benat Oteiza,²⁸ then director of *Haize Berri*, not only because they knew the artist, but because many of her paintings portrayed their houses.

Towards the late 1990s, *Haize Berri's* organizers decided to ask regionally known art historian and curator Jean-François Larralde to advise them in organizing more outreaching exhibitions. Larralde was a university professor in Bilbao and at the time chief curator of the museum of

²² Interviews with Pantxo Etchegoin, current president of the Basque Cultural Institute, and Daniel Landart, former president of the BCI, both July 1 2013 at Chateau Lota, seat of BCI, Uztaritz. Interview with Txomin Heguy, also former president of the BCI, July 3 2013, at Bar des Pyrenees, Bayonne. Interview with Daniel Arbeletxe, December 28, 2012, at Bar Ametza, Izura. Interview with Marie-Jeanne Mercapide, former director of *Haize Berri*, June 27 2013, at her home, Armañakenea, Izura. Interview with Piarres Erdozaintzi, June 22 2012, at his home, Saint Juste Ibarre. Interview with Arño Uhalde, member of board of *Haize Berri*, June 25 2012, at his home, Donaixti.

²³ "Nous voulons être la vitrine de la créativité en Pays basque". Minutes of *Haize Berri* administrative council meeting July 10 1997.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Interviews with Daniel Arbeletxe, June 24 2012, and Piarres Erdozaintzi, July 3 2012, both in Izura. See also 'D'Oteiza à Erdozaintzi', in *Sud Ouest*, June 14 2001.

²⁶ "Nous voulons être la vitrine de la créativité en Pays basque". Minutes of *Haize Berri* administrative council meeting July 10 1997.

²⁷ Interview with Beñat Oteiza, former employee of *Haize Berri*, July 6 2012, Bayonne.

²⁸ Ibid. Interview with Josette Dacosta, July 18 2013, at her home, Peikonia, Izura.

Guéthary, a nearby seaside town in the Pays Basque. Amongst other shows, Larralde had exhibited the works of Spanish Basque artists and had close contact with some of the most established of these, including Jorge Oteiza and Agustin Ibarrola. It was reportedly²⁹ Eñaut Larralde, then president of *Haize Berri*, who had first suggested the importance of making contact with Spanish Basque artists. He was aware of the Spanish Basque avant-garde movement and, as an *abertzale*, was motivated by the importance of collaborating with cultural actors on that side of the frontier.

Batasunekin

Le Centre Socio-Culturel HAIZE BERRI

Izura-ko Kultur etxea Iholdi ta Donapaleu kontonamenduetako herri kontratuaren ondorio bat da.

Herri kontratu hortan sei lan talde muntatu zituzten. Horietarik bat: «Commission Culture et Loisirs» delakoa. Lan talde honetan ehun bat jendeke parte hartu zuten: kantonamendu horietako demografia ta jenden arteko loturak ikertu zituzten, jenden beharrak eta eskaerak lerrokatu; ohartu ziren animazione baten ezartzea garrantzizkoa zela ez bakarrik, beti egiten den bezala, herri nausietan bainan ibar xokoetan ere.

Kultur etxe baten eraikitze toki bezala Izura hauilatu zuten: alabainan Izura biderditan bait da Garazi ta Donapaleu artean, Hazparne ta Maule artean. Izura-k bere ixtorio berezia bait du Kompostelateko bideak han elgarretaratzen zirelako; eta Izuran gertatzen baitzen etxe haundi bat, erdi hutsa, sobera diru gasturik gabe errexki antolatitakena.

Ibar xokoak ere animatu behar zirelakoan, asmatu zuten Izura-ko etxe honen meneko Heletan Antzerki zentro bat egitea, eta Bunuzen sala haundi bat zointan dantzan ikasten ahaliko baitzen.

kantaldi antzerki eta holako erakusketa ospetsuak agertzen ahaliko baitziren.

Kultur proiektua bera bederatzireneen inguruan osatua zuten: euskara, artzaintza gizartea, kantu ta musika, dantza, antzerkia, ixtorioa, geografia, lekuko ederti ta langintzak, lekuko aberastasunak eta Ekonomia.

1979ko Abendoan Herri Kontratuko biltzar nagusiak proiektu bere osotasunean onartu zuen hiru urte iragan ziren etxe-en antolatzen. Kultur lan taldeak, arte hortan, bere lana sakondu zuen. Bunuzeko herriak sala haundi hari eza eman zuen, Ainitz gertakarien ondotik, azkenean, sala hori Arberatzen egiten da.

Kultur etxeko lehen egiturak 1983ko urrian hasten ziren: haurren musika eskola orduan zabaltzen, mendi ibilaldiak ere bai ta adinetakoen dantza ikasketak.

Anartean Haize Berri Federakuntza sortu zen: 1983ko martxoan 25 elkarrek haren biltzar nagusian parte hartzen zuten.

Gaitzeko lana egiteko berehala agertu baitzen 1985ko urtarrilan Haize Berri-k bi «animateurs» delako langile bezala hartzen zituen.

Le rôle d'Haize Berri est de créer une dynamique culturelle dans les cantons de St-Palais et Iholdy, en relation avec les différentes associations déjà existantes. Son spectre d'action touche essentiellement la formation, l'information, l'animation, le sport et le bien être.

photos accompagnent aussi souvent des débats (Compostelle, Pelote, tzigane, peinture). Le centre a aussi publié un livret guide bilingue sur Compostelle et Ostabat avec des itinéraires de visites et un descriptif des différents sites.

Enfin, cette année, et à la demande d'un comité de fêtes, l'association Haize Berri a réuni les organisateurs de fêtes de toute la Basse Navarre. Cette nouvelle démarche dans notre région a déjà permis une première harmonisation quant aux choix des dates. Un

La formation

L'initiation ou le perfectionnement dans les activités comme la musique, le chant, la danse, la photo, les langues, est difficile lors d'un apprentissage individuel. D'où l'idée de proposer à Haize

Structure et action

“Haize Berri” Basque Social-Cultural Center

So, during the late 1990s and in early 2000, Jean-François Larralde served as artistic director for *Haize Berri*'s annual art events. He did this for free, he said,³⁰ out of solidarity to *Haize Berri*, which he saw “was doing an admirable job in organizing so many cultural initiatives on a voluntary basis”³¹ and out of fellow “abertzale”³² feeling. With his help, *Haize Berri* hosted a series of exhibitions showcasing the work of some of the key figures of the modern Basque avant-garde movement: Jorge Oteiza, Nestor Basterretxea, José Antonio Sistiaga and José Luis Zumeta. Over the years, Jean-François Larralde helped invite other established Basque artists including Juan Luis Goenaga, Christiane Giraud, Christine Etchevers, Zigor, Javier and Rosa

²⁹ Interviews with Daniel Arbeletche (as above), Piarres Erdozaintzi (as above) and Gabi Aguerre, July 1 2012, Izura.

³⁰ Interview with Jean-François Larralde, July 16 2012, Saint Jean de Luz.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Valverde, Koldobika Jauregui, Iñaki Olazabal, Xabier Morras, José Mari Lazkano and José Mari Anda.

The annual artistic events of *Haize Berri* consisted of an artist in residence, a collective exhibition and a special feature exhibition, which all took place over the summer months. The idea of an artist in residence came after some incidents during the collective exhibitions when several artworks had upset a few villagers. On one occasion, in 1996, an artist had constructed a sculpture made of body parts, which she had exhibited in a field at the bottom of the village. She had inadvertently placed her work close to a household that had two physically handicapped children. Within a few days, the sculpture was destroyed, allegedly by the family.³³ On another occasion, in 1997, the artists' collective Uztaro, from the nearby province of Soule, had set up a series of metal and wooden sculptures in another field and had hung underwear from them. The farmer who lived and worked nearby had shown his disapproval by removing the underwear. More positively, during another exhibition, an artist had created a big spherical sculpture out of barbed wire which had impressed the local farmers who, in this case, could appreciate the hard work involved in having to deal with such a difficult material with which they had direct experience of their own. The organizers of *Haize Berri* realized then the importance of presenting art in a way that the local public could identify with, and which could help them understand how an artist works.³⁴ In this vein, *Haize Berri* began to invite an artist every year to work in situ during the summer.

The first of these resident artists was Christiane Giraud, a non Basque-speaking sculptor based in Bayonne. She spent approximately two months in Izura in 1998, working in the open air on a large stone from a nearby quarry. She conceived her sculpture as a landmark, carved with fictitious names of pilgrims who would have walked on the path to Compostela, and on either side, she chiseled in the name of the village, Izura in Basque, and Ostabat in French. Giraud recalls positively her experience of working on this project.³⁵ Regularly, local farmers on their way back and forth to the fields with their cattle or sheep would stop and watch her at work and talk with her. At the end of the summer, Giraud's sculpture was inaugurated with a gathering over drinks and food, and *Haize Berri* noticed many more of the villagers attended.

The artist in residence program continued the following year with another local sculptor, Guanes Etchegaray, and two years later with Piarres Erdozaintzi, both also recommended by Jean-François Larralde. Larralde explained his recommendations purely on the basis of quality of work by these local and little-known artists. "They were from the area, were available and willing to work in situ, and could communicate with the surrounding population".³⁶ But, despite the inclusive qualities and positive results of the project, *Haize Berri* continued to have difficulty in gaining the favor of local officials and obtaining funds. The last artist in residence was in 2003, with the partnership of a gallery recently opened in the nearby town of Donibane Garazi. On this occasion, the resident artist was Spanish Basque sculptor Iñaki Olazabal. Olazabal worked with large sheets of zinc, which he would mold together with firing material. He worked outside, close to the main village square, and attracted the curiosity of passersby. He would often finish

³³ Interviews with various villagers, July 2012.

³⁴ "On veut aussi que les gens se rendent compte du travail réalisé par les artistes," Benat Oteiza in *Sud Ouest* June 14 2001.

³⁵ Interview with Christiane Giraud, July 2012.

³⁶ Interview with Jean-François Larralde, July 15 2012, Donibane Lohitzune.

OSTABAT

Une exposition en pleine ruralité.

Venez redécouvrir ce village qui ouvre ses rues à l'expression artistique !

Luis Goenaga, le centre s'est servi d'un village entier pour donner libre cours à l'inspiration de sept artistes différents.

Le centre culturel Haïze Berri donne une nouvelle dimension à ses expositions. En plus de sa galerie traditionnelle où sont exposées en ce moment des œuvres du sculpteur Jose Ramon Anda et du peintre Juan

naire, par la provocation, par l'humour et par le talent. Les artistes ont souvent des formules compliquées pour transmettre le sens de leurs œuvres. Celles-ci sont exposées simplement, sans avertissement ni explication, chacun y trouvera ce qu'il lui plaira.

▲ Philippe Franzen expose au café Ametzanea

▲ La Galerie d'Ostabat

Les rues, les murs des maisons, mais aussi l'église et le café sont devenus le temps d'un été, un espace où se croisent la vie quotidienne et l'inattendu. Rien d'ennuyeux, bien au contraire, vous y ferez une promenade, au cours de laquelle vous vous laisserez surprendre par l'imagi-

▲ Michel Duboscq et ses mosaïques à l'église

▲ Le plasticien Daniel Saroberry et ses mots

14

Vies & Loisirs - Août 99

"An exhibit in the middle of nature" (1999)

his day with a visit to the village café run by Daniel Arbeletche, one of the main organizers of *Haize Berri*. Olazabal did not speak French, but was able to communicate with locals in Basque, despite his different accent and vocabulary. Through his sociability, Olazabal was able to connect to a certain degree with the villagers, in spite of their differences in appearance and politics - he resembled more the revelers who attended punk rock concerts than the farmers of Izura. He also had an ETA militant background, which he did not speak about but which some villagers suspected.³⁷

After Olazabal, the artist in residence program stalled again for lack of funds. The other artistic projects, on the other hand, were able to continue, as they were less costly, relying on the goodwill of artists to cover their own expenses. *Uda Erakusketa*, which means 'summer exhibition' in Basque, became the main feature of *Haize Berri*'s art projects. The exhibition drew upon the original idea of inviting artists to create a work in the open air, in the streets or fields of the village, over the course of July and August. Getting the artists to interact with their environment created some interesting synergies, often challenging the villagers' perception of their surroundings. For instance, Juan Luis Goenaga, a well-known artist in Euskadi, created an artwork in the tradition of land art, arranging stones in a field, which, seen from afar, suggested a human figure. On another occasion, French artist Michel Duboscq created large cartoon figures, which he hung on the façade of an abandoned farm at the bottom of the village. Meanwhile, Josette Dacosta painted gigantic handmade canvases evoking the colors and spirit of old farm walls, suspended between two buildings to float in the breeze. Every year, *Haize Berri* proposed a theme for the artist that was sufficiently open to different interpretations, such as 'light', 'music', 'the city', and 'movement'.

Many of the artists returned year after year. Juan Luis Goenaga, for example, was willing to drive the two hours from his home in Euskadi to take part, motivated by his love of the rural countryside, the opportunity to work on the French side, and out of budding friendship with the organizers of *Haize Berri*.³⁸ He didn't speak French but was able to communicate with *Haize Berri* members and villagers in Basque. Both for him and other artists from the Spanish side, including Iñaki Olazabal, a Basque cultural or nationalist affinity with the French side was also a motivation to come.³⁹

The first of the summer special feature exhibitions launched under the direction of Jean-François Larralde, in 1998, involved a partnership with the nearby village of Irisarri to showcase the work of José Luis Zumeta, a member of the historical Spanish Basque avant-garde movement of the 1960s. Two years later, another member of the historical Basque avant-garde, Nestor Basterretxea, exhibited his famous sculptures *Serie Cosmogónica Vasca*, which explore different themes of traditional Basque mythology in abstract form through wood and metal. His work shared the exhibition hall with younger and less established French Basque artist Christine Etchevers who, using the medium of paint, cardboard and collage, also worked on the basis of traditional Basque themes and artefacts, with abstract bright colors. The so-called leader of the historical Basque avant-garde, the sculptor Jorge Oteiza, who was a close friend and collaborator of Basterretxea, was also present at the inauguration. The following year, it was Oteiza's turn to

³⁷ Conversations with local inhabitants (names withheld for anonymity), and with Olazabal over the course of several meetings in the summers of 2011, 2012 and 2013.

³⁸ Interview with Juan Luis Goenaga, July 16 2012, Donostia.

³⁹ Interviews with Goenaga and Olazabal respectively, July 21 and 23 2012.

exhibit, this time having the whole exhibition room to himself as one of the most widely recognized and celebrated artist of the Basque avant-garde movement.⁴⁰

These three important shows were well covered by the local media and succeeded in increasing the number of visitors to *Haize Berri's* exhibitions. *Haize Berri's* reputation as an unusual contemporary art center was growing in the region. In 2002, again with the help of Jean-Francois Larralde, the summer exhibition featured the sculptures of Jesus Echevarria, another member of the older generation of celebrated Spanish Basque avant-garde artists. There again, such a feature exhibition succeeded in bringing an audience from further afield, especially from the urbanized coastal part of the Basque Country, a population that would not usually come to what they consider an isolated part of the region. *Haize Berri* was now clearly on the cultural map.

In the years that followed, the exhibitions always mixed artists who were more established, especially on the Spanish side of the state frontier, such as Jose Antonio Sistiaga, Juan Luis Goenaga, Rosa and Javier Valverde, Koldobika Jauregui, Xabier Morras, Jesus Mari Lazkano and Antton Mendizabal, with younger or lesser-known artists, more often than not from the French side. Some also made their debut with *Haize Berri*, such as Aitziber Akerreta and myself. *Haize Berri* had become an important reference, with which Basque artists wished to be associated. A demonstration of this came when a number of artists contributed works to raise funds for *Haize Berri* in 2006. Spanish Basque sculptor Zigor, a former ETA member now settled in Biarritz, explained his reason for doing so as follows: "What is done here (at *Haize Berri*) is not done anywhere else. Its work is indispensable for going forward with creativity in the Pays Basque".⁴¹

This success notwithstanding, *Haize Berri* remained locally controversial and regionally a financial failure. Local inhabitants did not become more involved with *Haize Berri* over the years. Politicians gave it little support and regional institutions continued to give only limited and intermittent funding to its projects. Much of *Haize Berri's* success was due to the personalities, charisma and energy of some of its key members. As these started getting older or tired, and the younger generation was engaged elsewhere, the project lost its impetus. Beset by growing financial and internal difficulties, *Haize Berri* eventually held the last of its activities in 2009.

The Politics of Culture

The explanation for the controversies around *Haize Berri* can be found in the political and sociocultural context in which it was active. The organizers of *Haize Berri* worked in a context that was rural, where the population had little initiation to cultural matters beyond traditional folkloric expressions. Local customs were being lost, and Euskara had given way to French through mass media, public schooling and the general economic and political structure. The local population was on the whole conservative and set in its ways. *Haize Berri*, by contrast, was associated with a new Basque political and cultural movement, which, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, was a focus of much conflict in the region, especially due to the violent activities of ETA and *Iparretarrak*.

⁴⁰ Jorge Oteiza passed away a year and a half later.

⁴¹ <http://www.lejpb.com/idadzia/20070425/art201846.php>. Accessed September 13 2013.

Haize Berri came in with a vision and a project to promote “Basque culture”. While its organizers claimed not to be political, they did see culture as part of politics, and in the context of the region, they were indeed political. Whilst *Haize Berri* did win over some people, especially thanks to the charisma of specific members and participants, it continued to be viewed by many local people as a separate group with an agenda. In its project to develop and promote ‘Basque culture’, its founders worked with a diversity of expressions, including artists who did not necessarily identify themselves as Basque. Yet they still worked within specific parameters: they talked about Basque culture in a way that was perceived as overbearing by a local population who already felt Basque in their own way. Unwittingly, *Haize Berri* imposed a set of boundaries that directly affected the local population, whose feeling of being disturbed and imposed upon was accentuated by *Haize Berri*’s organization of cultural activities and showcasing of art from the Spanish Basque world, presenting it as Basque.

Since the mid-2000s, the Basque nationalist discourse has been normalized to the extent that it is no longer the source of strong identity conflict in the region. Numerous local inhabitants who would not have done so only a few years ago now readily say they are Basque and are part of the Basque nation. During *Haize Berri*’s existence, Izura’s municipal council was dominated by generally conservative forces. Today, by contrast, Izura has a dynamic mayor, Daniel Olçomendi, who is a member of the generation in its early 40s, well educated and with political ambitions, who identifies himself an abertzale.⁴² He grew up on a farm and speaks Euskara fluently, having taken lessons to refresh his knowledge of the language he spoke as a child. He has also taken a leading role as a member of the left-wing Basque nationalist coalition that serves as the local opposition to the established mainstream parties of on both the left and the right.

None of this upsets local people in the way that it would have only a few years ago. This, I venture to say, has much to do with not only the charisma Olçomendi enjoys amongst the other local members of his generation, many of which have joined him in the municipal council, but the fact that Basque nationalism is now normalized. Basque nationalism, or the idea of the existence of a Basque nation, is no longer a disputed fact. Basque nationalist parties of varying ideologies have succeeded in making Basque national identity an established idea and reality. This is embraced by a younger generation that has grown up with the more active and widespread presence of Basque nationalism, and so is also more accepted by the older generations. With the normalization of Basque nationalism comes the normalization of a notion of a Basque culture and art.

⁴² <http://www.leipb.com/paperezkoa/20130302/390441/fr/Entretien-avec-Daniel-OLCOMENDY---Maire-d%E2%80%99Ostabat-Asme--Les-habitants-ce-territoire-doivent-prendre-leur-destin-mains->. Accessed September 13 2013.

■ PYRÉNÉES-ATLANTIQUES

UDA ERAKUSKETA A OSTABAT

D'Oteiza à Erdozaintzi

Les sculptures de Jorge Oteiza seront à l'honneur pour la douzième exposition d'été organisée par le centre Haize Berri, qui accueille aussi Piarres Erdozaintzi comme artiste en résidence

Demain vendredi, à 19 heures, le vernissage de l'exposition d'été aura lieu à Ostabat. La douzième du genre, toujours vouée à l'art contemporain et qui accueille encore une fois de grands artistes de toutes les provinces basques. Présentation par Beñat Oteiza, directeur du centre culturel Haize Berri.

« SUD-OUEST ». — Uda Erakusketa en est à sa douzième édition. La formule a-t-elle évolué depuis son lancement ?

Beñat Oteiza. — Nous avons lancé cette idée d'exposition d'été parce que nous estimions que les arts plastiques n'étaient pas très présents en Pays Basque intérieur, alors que nous avions pas mal d'artistes. L'idée était donc de créer un lieu d'expression. Jusqu'en 1995, cette exposition était ouverte à tous les artistes qui souhaitaient y participer. Mais effectivement, nous nous rendions compte que cet aspect hétéroclite était frustrant aussi bien pour les visiteurs que pour les artistes. D'où la décision de cibler mieux cette exposition, avec deux objectifs : faire connaître quelques artistes et valoriser l'art contemporain en milieu rural.

INTER. — Beaucoup d'artistes du Pays Basque s'intéressent à l'art contemporain.

« S-O ». — À quels artistes êtes-vous adressés avec ces nouveaux objectifs ?

B. O. — Notre exposition est ouverte à tous les artistes du Pays Basque et nous avons vu qu'il y en avait beaucoup qui s'intéressaient à l'art contemporain, tant en Pays Basque Nord qu'en Pays Basque Sud. L'exposition se divise donc en deux parties. Une partie intérieure, avec des œuvres exposées en salle et une partie extérieure, avec des sculptures que l'on essaime tout autour du village d'Ostabat. Cette fois nous aurons des œuvres de Juan Luis Goenaga, Patric Yan, Maya Curutchet, Federico Sanchez, Untaro, Eric Latastère, Inaki Olazabal, Guanes Etcheharay, Christine Etchevers.

Mais on veut aussi que les gens se rendent compte du travail réalisé par les artistes. C'est pourquoi nous accueillons des artistes en résidence, qui composent des œuvres qui restent ensuite au village, avec un thème qui est le carrefour, car Ostabat est à la croisée des chemins de Saint-Jacques. Cette année, cet artiste sera un voisin au talent trop méconnu à mes yeux, Piarres Erdozaintzi, de Saint-Just-Ibarre.

Jorge Oteiza sera l'invité d'honneur de cette douzième édition d'Uda Erakusketa (Photo DR)

« Nous aurons une douzaine d'œuvres de Jorge Oteiza »

« S-O ». — Vous avez déjà eu de grands artistes du Sud, comme Zumeta, Goenaga, Nestor Basterretxea. Votre exposition leur est-elle toujours ouverte cette année ?

B. O. — Bien sûr, et nous ne pourrions faire mieux puisque nous accueillons les œuvres de Jorge Oteiza, qui est certainement l'ar-

tiste basque le plus connu de sa génération. Il est de ceux qui ont su trouver des liens, des connexions entre leurs propres racines basques et les courants les plus modernes de l'art contemporain. Il fut révéillé par la création de la chapelle d'Arantzazu, où il travailla notamment avec Basterretxea. Il a gagné de nombreux prix, entre autres le grand prix de la biennale de Sao Paulo. Nous aurons donc une douzaine d'œuvres de Jorge Oteiza, qui seront exposées dans une des salles du centre culturel.

« S-O ». — Comment sont choisis tous ces artistes ?

B. O. — Nous avons un commissaire d'exposition qui se charge de tous les choix artistiques. Il s'agit de Jean-François Larralde, le conservateur du musée de Guéth-

ry. C'est lui qui a insisté pour que nous invitions Piarres Erdozaintzi comme artiste en résidence. Il sera aussi des nôtres pour les deux événements culturels que nous lions à la présence des œuvres d'Oteiza. Le vendredi 13 juillet, nous organiserons une conférence sur les sculptures de cet artiste. Et le 27 juillet, en collaboration avec Urdako Euskal Unibertsitatea (UEU), nous aurons une autre conférence sur Oteiza et l'architecture.

A noter que dès les premiers jours d'exposition, du 15 juin au 1^{er} juillet, les écoles pourront venir à Ostabat. Et là, c'est Piarres Erdozaintzi qui leur présentera les œuvres d'Oteiza.

Propos recueillis par MARCEL BEDAXAGAR

Vernissage vendredi

■ L'exposition sera ouverte du 15 juin au 17 août, tous les jours, de 14 à 19 heures. Le prix d'entrée est fixé à la modique somme de 10 francs.

Le vernissage se fera vendredi à partir de 19 heures, en trois temps. Les artistes présenteront leurs œuvres au cours d'un tour du village en musique. Puis, une performance se déroulera sur la place d'Ostabat avec Maya Curutchet et son groupe : musique, danse et peinture s'uniront dans la création.

Un repas viendra clore ce vernissage décontracté : 70 francs pour les adultes et 35 francs les enfants (inscriptions au 05.59.37.85.79).

2001ko Ekainaren 14-koa

"Sud-Ouest"

Summer exhibit (2001): From Oteiza to Erdozaintzi (2001)

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