



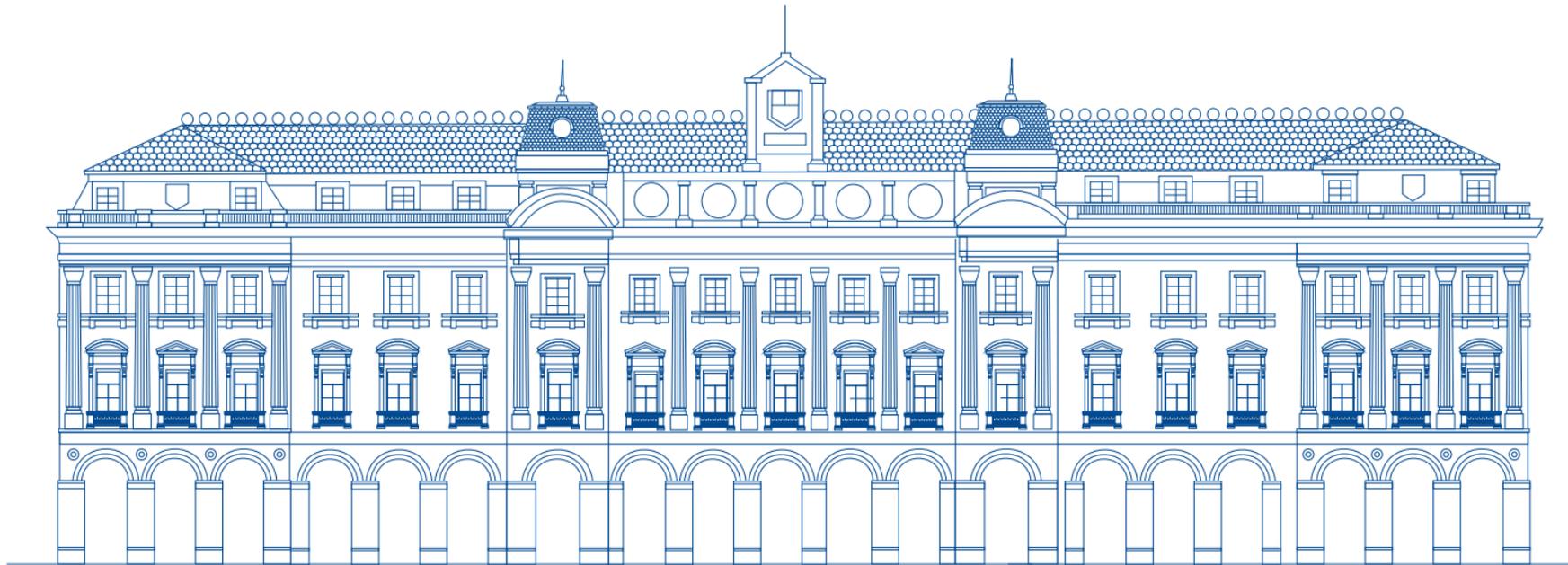
# Gipuzkoa Provincial Council Building

Gipuzkoako  
Foru Aldundia  
Diputación Foral  
de Gipuzkoa



ORAIN  
GIPUZKOA





[gipuzkoa@gipuzkoa.eus](mailto:gipuzkoa@gipuzkoa.eus)  
**[gipuzkoa.eus](http://gipuzkoa.eus)**



## THE GIPUZKOA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL BUILDING

The Provincial Council Building dominates one of the main enclaves in the 19th-century extension of the city. This rounded off the Plaza de Gipuzkoa, designed in 1867 by José Eleuterio Escoriaza in the neo-classical Isabelline style and embellished by the English-style gardens designed in 1877 by Pierre Ducasse. Its construction fulfilled the desire to provide a suitable building to house the Provincial Council, which it lacked despite the fact that San Sebastián had been the administrative capital of the province since 1854.

The first design, devised in 1878 by José Goicoa, envisaged a large ballroom in the main block and allocated the side wings to the Provincial Council and the Central Government Departments. This idea



was changed in the following year, when the building work began, and the ballroom was removed to reserve the central area for the Provincial Council and the wings for the Civil Governor's office and the Tax Office.

Although the building aimed to provide the design of the square with a degree of continuity through its elevation in the form of a portico and three storeys, its monumental facade makes it stand out from the other buildings. In turn, the main block particularly stands out as it seems to move forward and it also contains most of the sculptural features. When modelling this, Goicoa was inspired by Charles Garnier's Paris Opera House (1857), a standard benchmark in the Neo-Baroque architecture of the second half of the century. The provincial council building took from the Opera House two side blocks that jutted out and were finished off with curved gables, the giant order colonnade covering two storeys, and the idea of including recesses with busts of famous men (moved to the attic here).

*Main facade*

The figures of Urdaneta, Elcano, Oquendo, Lezo and Legazpi was probably chosen by the historian Nicolás de Soraluce, who was responsible for recovering those outstanding figures from the past for the collective memory of Gipuzkoa. Not for nothing did he constantly devote himself to this task through his writing, by naming streets in the enlargement area of San Sebastián and by encouraging the construction of various monuments that were built during this period in the province.

The five busts (1882-83) were the work of Marcial Aguirre, the most important sculptor

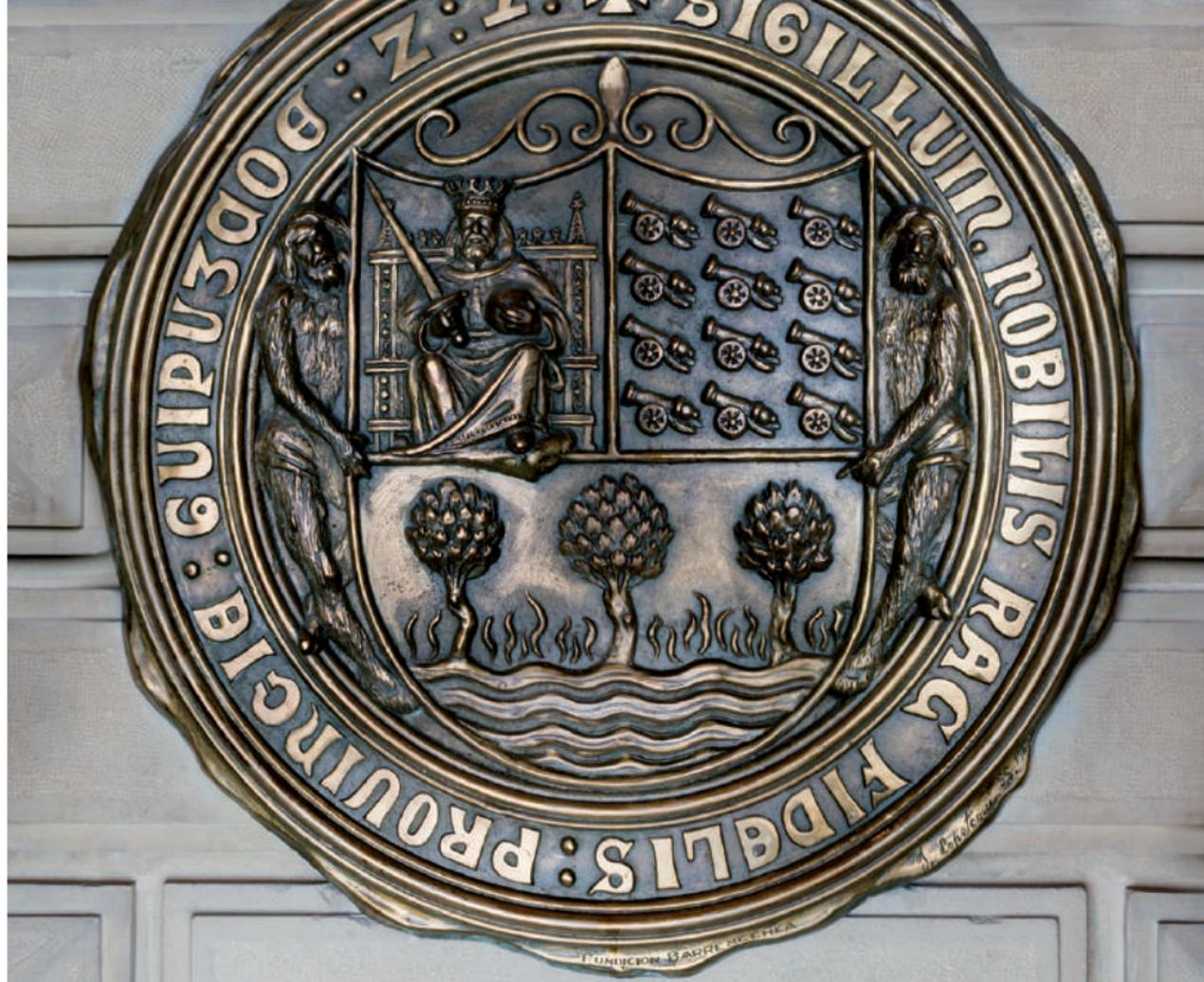
in Guipuzcoa at this time. The other sculptures were created by Felipe Arrese, Jacinto Matheu and José Soler; the latter was responsible for the coat-of-arms of the province flanked by two Hercules crowning the building (1883-84).

Just after it was opened, a fire broke out in 1885 that destroyed the building. Only the foundations and the façades survived, which meant that all of the interior had to be rebuilt. The new building work was designed and supervised from 1887 by the two architects who had completed the Casino building (the current city hall) that same year, Luis Aladrén

and Adolfo Morales de los Ríos, who took over from an exhausted Goicoa, who could not face embarking on the rebuilding work. The new building was completed in 1890, The new provincial council building was completed in 1890, even though it was expanded decades later, when the side wings were enlarged after the exchanges that took place between 1911 and 1948.

As a result of this, the current interior dates back to the second building and to the successive alterations implemented with the extensions.





*José Lopetegui. Gipuzkoa 16th-century general seal*

## THE LOBBY AND THE MAIN STAIRCASE

The main door leads on to a large hallway from which the large imperial staircase made out of Carrara marble with bronze balustrades rises up to the main floor.

As for the lobby on the main floor, it was decorated by Juan Bautista Soler Blasco in 1951. Except for a pair of allegories about seafaring and rural Gipuzkoa, the programme respected what had been in the earlier paintings that they sought to replace: the crests of Gipuzkoa and of the four main district towns, along with views of them (San Sebastián, Tolosa, Bergara and Azpeitia-Loyola).

Most of the decor in the building is based around a magnificent tribute to the famous men of the province and to those figures that fostered its wellbeing, although it also serves to reveal the role played by the Provincial Council as a patron and promotor of the Fine Arts throughout the last century and a half.



The current dome over the staircase, painted by Alejandro Irureta in the same year, replaced another one produced by him in 1884 that was destroyed in the fire. The motif chosen for this was an allegory of the Fortuna de Guipúzcoa accompanied by figures representing industry, agriculture and justice.



*Alejandro Irureta. Fortuna de Guipúzcoa, 1889*

*Old coats-of-arms of Gipuzkoa*



*Staircase of honour*

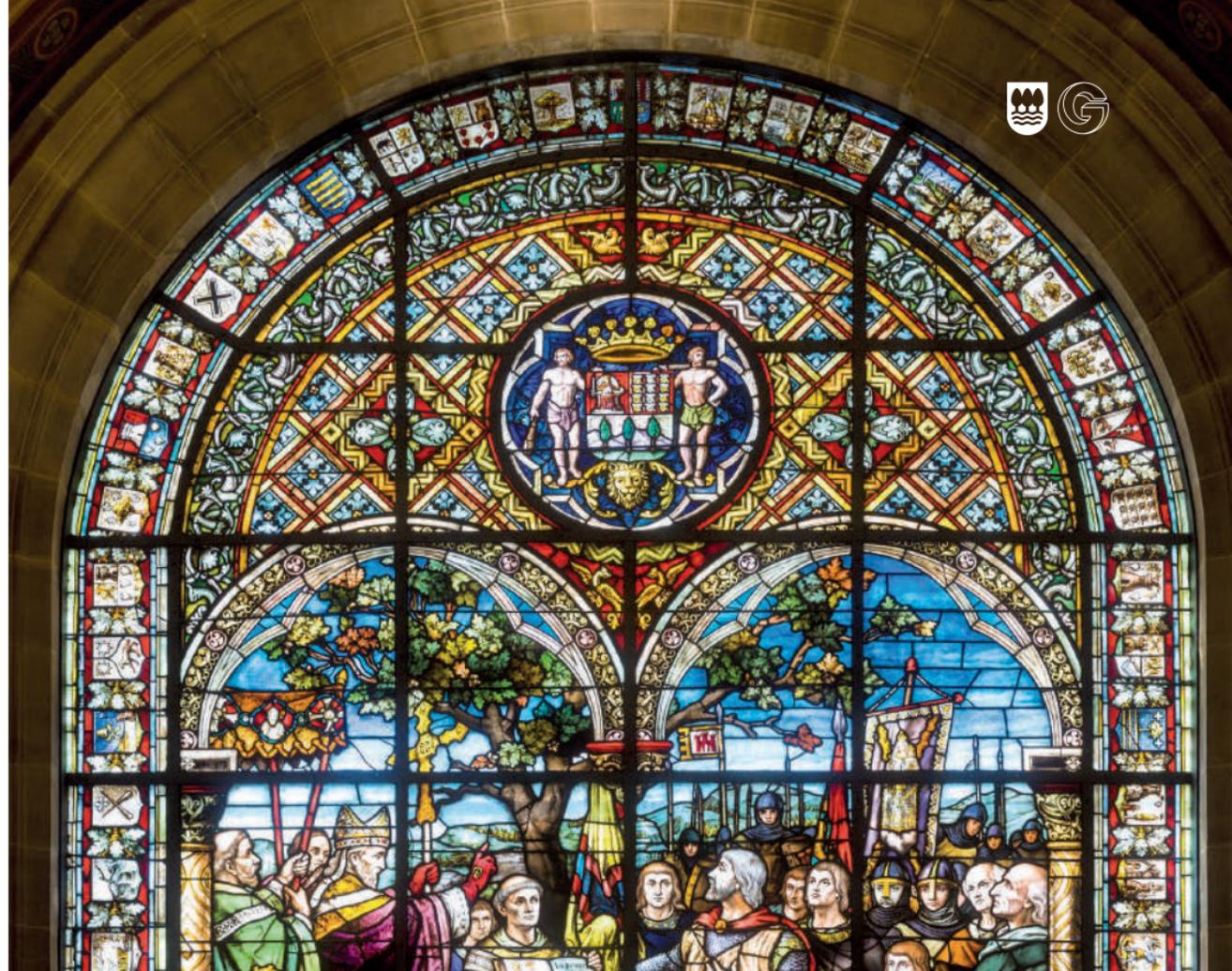


## THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOW

The landing that divides this into two is lit by a magnificent stained-glass window that can be seen from both floors. It was produced by Mayer & Cía, from Munich, in 1890 and is based on an oil model painted a year earlier by José Echena, the painter from Gipuzkoa

It depicts Alfonso VIII swearing to uphold the Charter of Gipuzkoa in 1200, and follows a common compositional scheme in painting local history: the main characters are shown sheltering under a tree –preferably an oak–, against a background of soldiers, and old people and/or women completing the composition at the sides.

Two smaller decorative stained-glass windows are to be found on both sides of the main one, which were produced in 1889 by the first Maumejean workshop, based in Pau at the time.



*Stained glass depicting Alfonso VIII swearing to uphold the Charter of Gipuzkoa in 1200, 1890*







*Sèvres Vase decorated by E. Collot*

## THRONE ROOM

The largest room in the building leads off the main staircase. It has a coffered ceiling in timber-imitation stucco and the walls are upholstered in linen embossed with the embroidered old coat-of-arms of the province.

In 1990, the new coat-of-arms was adopted by a provincial council order. It has three green yews on a golden field and, at the foot of them waves of water in blue and silver. It is reproduced on the trims of the windows and on the upholstery of the chairs. The room also contains two Sèvres porcelain vases from the 19th century decorated by E. Collot with gallant scenes.





Manuel Losada.  
Portrait of Carmelo Echegaray, c. 1926



Simón Arrieta.  
Portrait of José Francisco de Aizquibel, 1943

## JULIO URQUIJO LIBRARY

The room that has been used as the library since the building was first built is to the left of the stairs. It was later named the Julio Urquijo Library as, between the 1950s and 1993, he looked after the fourteen thousand volumes that made up the valuable book collection belonging to the Basque studies expert, which was acquired by the Provincial Council and which is currently in the safekeeping of the library in the Koldo Mitxelena Cultural Centre.

The space pays tribute to three outstanding representatives of local literature, who are recalled through their portraits: Urquijo himself, painted by Thyra Ekwall de Ullmann; José Francisco de Aizquibel, by Simón Arrieta, and Carmelo Echegaray, by Manuel Losada.





*Pascual Munoa. The caravel Santa María, c. 1929*

## SAINT IGNATIUS CHAPEL

The chapel in the building is dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order and patron saint of Gipuzkoa. Behind the fire-gilded iron fence and on the altar, the ascetic portrait of the saint, painted by Elías Salaverría in 1916, dominates the small space. On the left, a stained glass window recalls the Virgin of Aranzazu, who is also the patron saint of the province.

The hallway leading off the chapel contains other paintings and historical objects of interest. One of the most outstanding of these is another painting by Elías Salaverría, Elcano's

Offering (1922), which with his usual sobriety and compositional detachment, shows the arrival of the eighteen members of the crew who had survived the first voyage round the world in the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda.

You can also see here the model of the Santa María caravel, one of the modelling pieces by Pascual Munoa, the draughtsman and shipbuilder, which he produced around 1929, and the portraits of José Miguel de Barandiarán and Manuel Lecuona, both painted in 1983 by Enrique Albizu.





*Stained glass in the Saint Ignatius chapel*

## **SAINT IGNATIUS CHAPEL STAINED GLASS**

The ceiling in the hallway is covered with allegorical stained glass dedicated to Work and Savings, produced by J. H. Maumejean Brothers around 1915.





*Ignacio Zuloaga. Juan Sebastián Elcano, 1921*



*Anonymous.*

*Tapestry commemorating the first journey around the world*

## ELCANO ROOM

The origin of this room is linked to one of the tributes that were organised in 1922 to celebrate the fourth centenary of the first journey around the world. In order to honour the memory of Juan Sebastián Elcano, the navigator from Gipuzkoa who led the final part of the expedition, the Provincial Council commissioned three paintings by Elías Salaverría, Pablo Uranga and Ignacio Zuloaga to decorate the room to be dedicated to Elcano.

It is currently dominated by the idealised portrait of the seafarer painted by Zuloaga, who is posing in front of a view of Getaria, his home town, and holding a world map with the route he followed. An old commemorative tapestry of the journey can also be seen in this room whose depiction of Elcano was used as the model for the painting.





*Elías Salaverría.  
Portrait of Queen María Cristina, 1928*



*Alfonsine clock*

## QUEEN MARÍA CRISTINA'S ROOM

The room dedicated to Queen Maria Christina of Habsburg-Lorraine is off the main hall and marks the start of the right wing of the building.

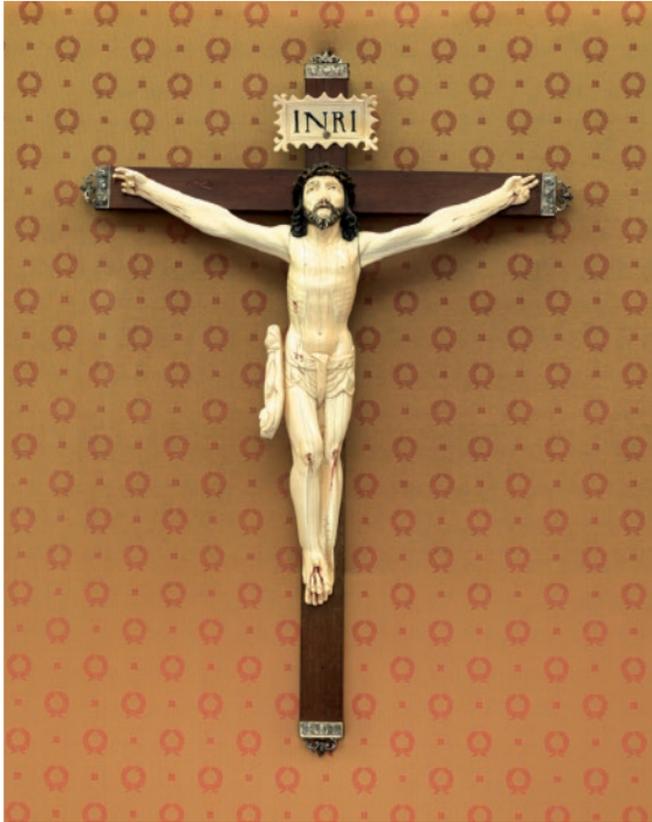
She was regent during King Alfonso XIII's minority and kept close ties with San Sebastián after she decided to set up her summer court there in 1887.

The room keeps the decorative coherence of its beginnings intact. A portrait of the queen painted by Elías Salaverría in

1928 dominates the room, where the impressive oak fireplace carved with Neo-Plateresque motifs is the main feature along the walls upholstered in red silk.

The furniture in the Alfonsine style with embossed embroidered upholstery and a Louis XVI-style table stands on a large rug woven at the Royal Tapestry Factory.





*Anonymous. Christ crucified, XVIIIth century*

## **FORMER COUNCIL ROOM**

Various marble sculptures, the work of one of the Provincial Council's first scholarship holders, the sculptor Marcial Aguirre, are along the corridor that acts as a hallway. Morra Player (1871), a piece with an Italian Costumbrista theme, carved during his stay in Rome, stands out among these.

Until 2006, the Council Room was where the Provincial Councillors met each week. A Hispanic-Filipino marble Christ from the 18th century, noted for its orientalist features and formal schematics, dominates the room. The oak chairs are carved with the Gipuzkoa coat-of-arms.

## PLENARY ROOM

This was the Plenary Room where the General Assembly met until they moved to a new site built in Miramón in 2007.

Currently, after being remodelled, it is the room where the Councillors meet weekly.

Although the facilities have been modernised, its decor in golden stucco with high reliefs depicting mythological figures is the original.





Plenary Room



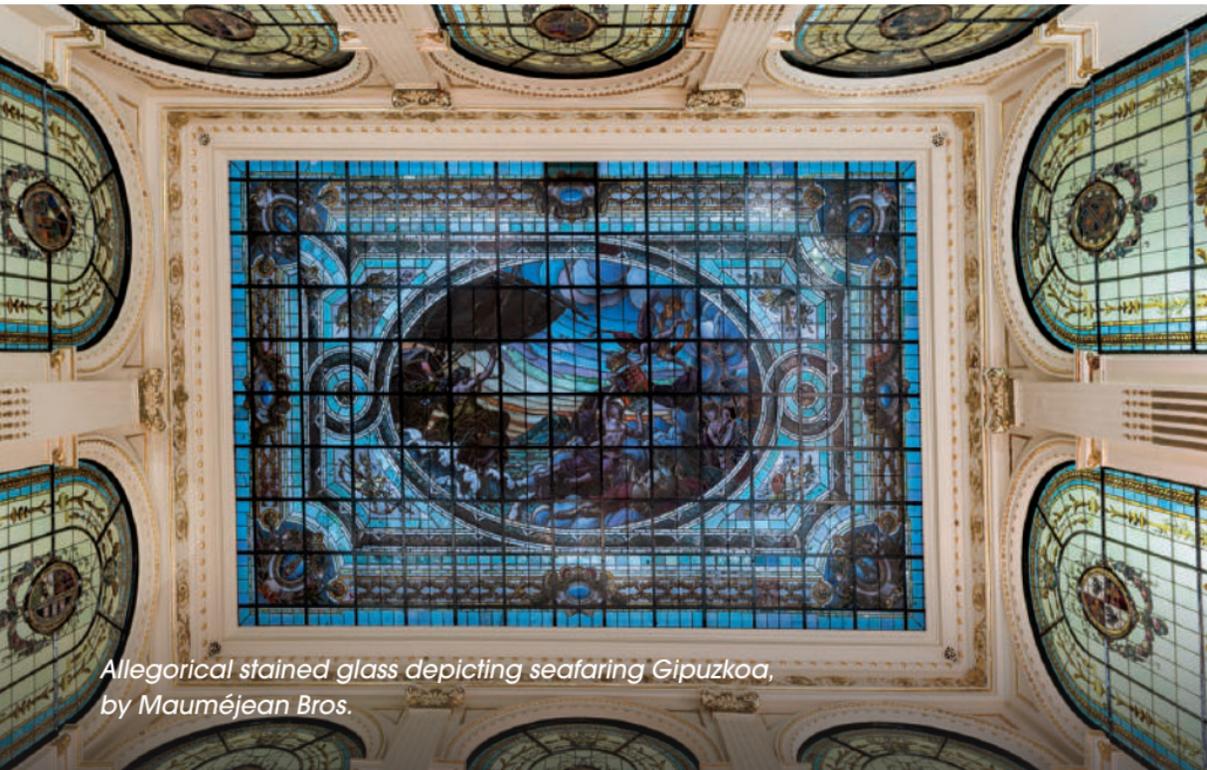
## THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

The courtyard serves as an anteroom to the office. It is laid out symmetrically and is adjacent to the chapel in the left wing; its ceiling is an allegorical stained glass entitled *Seafaring Guipúzcoa*, produced by J. H. Maumejean Hermanos.

The stained glass of the windows on the second floor, on the other hand, are dedicated to twelve famous sons of the province from the 15th to the 19th century. As a further tribute, the statute to Jesús María Leizaola by Xebas Larrañaga (2007) has recently been added, which provides a vertical counterpoint to the spherical clock acquired by the institution from Pablo Beiner, a watchmaker from San Sebastián, in 1916.

As regards the Office of the Provincial Council President, its walls are made out of mahogany and cherry wood with bronze fixtures and its main feature is a tapestry commemorating the 1391 Assembly in Getaria.

The Provincial Council President's Office



Allegorical stained glass depicting seafaring Gipuzkoa,  
by Mauméjean Bros.



Tapestry commemorating the Getaria Assembly in 1391

## OTHER ARTWORKS



*Elías Salaverría.  
Elcano's offering, 1922*



*Enrique Albizu.  
Portrait of José Miguel de Barandiarán, 1983*



*Enrique Albizu.  
Portrait of Manuel Lecuona, 1983*



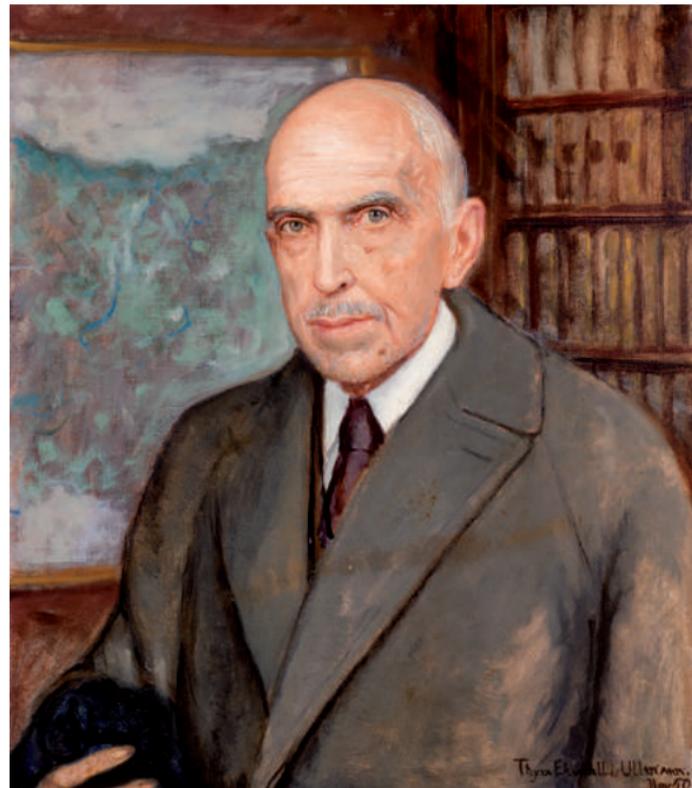
Xebas Larrañaga.  
Jesús María Leizaola, 2007



Marcial Aguirre.  
Morra Player, 1871



Pablo Beiner. Clock in the  
anteroom of the Provincial  
Council President's Office,  
c. 1916



Thyra Ekwall de Ullmann.  
Portrait of Julio Urquijo, 1950



## HISTORY

Gipuzkoa began to take shape as such around the year 1025, and became part of the kingdom of Castile of Alfonso VIII in the year 1200 (Swearing of the Charter). From then on the definitive link between Gipuzkoa and the Crown of Castile was closely related to the essential phenomenon of the territorial organization of the province in which the creation of towns and the different monarchs played a leading role.

The *fueros* (charters) are unwritten laws based on continuous custom and usage in a province, and go way back in time (called Charter Law). After the Third Carlist War, the *fueros* were abolished by the Law of the 21st of July 1876, and the First Additional Provision of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 enshrines respect and protection for the historical rights of the chartered provinces.

The Basque Country bases its system of self-government on the Basque Autonomy Statute of 1979 (Statute of Gernika). Since then the historical province of Gipuzkoa has been politically structured through the General Assembly and the Provincial Council.

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly of Gipuzkoa is the parliament and "legislative" body of the historical territory and province of Gipuzkoa, while the Provincial Council would be the "executive" body. Since 2007 it has been based in the Miramón Technology Park.

The General Assembly forms the highest public representative and participatory body in the Historical province and is shaped following a parliamentary model. It consists of 51 councillors elected by universal suffrage and their term of office lasts for the same period as the term of the town councils. It operates in plenary sessions and Commissions, and its competences include approving provincial laws, electing the President of the Provincial Council, approving the budgets of the Historical territory and supervising and promoting the activity of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa.

## **THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL**

The Provincial Council is responsible for governing and administering the Historical Territory, and the Provincial Council President, elected by the General Assembly, presides over and leads the Provincial Council and implements the programme of the government. The provincial Councillors are named by the President of the Council and make up the Governing Council.

The Provincial Councillors' Board is the governing body of the Provincial Council and is responsible, under the leadership of the Provincial Council President, for establishing the guidelines and aims of the provincial government's actions.

The Provincial Council President enacts the Provincial Regulations and Decrees and personally represents the Historical Territory of Gipuzkoa in its relations with the State, the other Autonomous Communities and other Bodies.

At the present time the Provincial Council is structured around 9 Departments:

1. Council President's Personal Area
2. Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports
3. Governance and Communication with Society
4. Economic Promotion, Rural Affairs and Territorial Balance
5. Mobility and Spatial Planning
6. Tax Office and Finance
7. Road infrastructure
8. Social Policies
9. Environment and Waterworks

As for its organic structure, its nearly 1,800 workers consist of the Council President, the Provincial Councillors, the General Managers and public servants.

The competences of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa come from three sources:

1. Statutory competences (that come from the Statute of Gernika): Provincial Tax Office, Roads and Thoroughfares, Organisation or Budgets.
2. The competences resulting from the Law concerning the Historical Territories: exclusive competences such as Mountains and Forestry services, Public Works, Archives, Libraries or Museums, and those that involve the development and implementation of the laws and regulations of the common institutions of the Basque Country.
3. Competences resulting from local governmental legislation; provincial council activity to do with regulating the various public municipal activity sectors.

## PROVINCIAL TAX SYSTEM OF ITS OWN

Having its own provincial tax office is a basic foundation of the administration of Gipuzkoa as it entails a lot of competences and obligations; among others, raising taxes: (except in the 3 Historical Territories of the Basque Country and Navarre, in the rest of the State it is the Central Government that collects taxes).

Tax relations between the Basque Country and the Spanish State are regulated by the provincial system known as the Economic Agreement, and thanks to this the Historical Territories have the capacity to regulate taxes and have the autonomy to manage and collect these. This involves the existence of a specific Basque tax system, which regulates its own taxes that shape a taxation system, such as for example, Personal Income Tax or Corporation Tax, among others.

By virtue of the Economic Agreement, the Basque Country passes on a part of its tax resources to the Spanish central government as a contribution to paying the cost of all those competences of the Central Government that have not been transferred to the Basque Autonomous Community, such as for example Defence and the Armed Forces or the customs and tariff systems.

This contribution (the so-called Quota) is estimated by applying an allocation rate (6.24%) calculated on the basis of how much the central government spends in all Spain in each competence that has not been transferred and by allocating a fixed percentage of total expenditure so that the Basque institutions (Government, Provincial councils and local institutions) accept the risk of taking their own decisions on regulating tax collection, (that is, regardless of how much they raise, they always have to contribute the same percentage, so that in a year that they raise less money, the financial burden is greater, and vice-versa).

Provincial Council President's  
Personal Area

**943 112 137**

mgurruchaga@gipuzkoa.eus

Department of Culture, Tourism, Youth  
and Sport

**943 112 903**

moyarbide@gipuzkoa.eus

Department of Governance and  
Communication with Society

**943 112 316**

erey@gipuzkoa.eus

Department of Economic Promotion,  
Rural affairs and Territorial Balance

**943 112 389**

midoeta@gipuzkoa.eus

Department of Mobility  
and Spatial Planning

**943 112 414**

jjgoa@gipuzkoa.eus

Tax Office and Finance  
Department

**902 100 040**

gipuzkoa@gipuzkoa.eus

Road Infrastructure  
Department

**943 113 771**

bidesarrera@gipuzkoa.eus

Social Policies Department

**943 112 511 / 943 112 631**

info.gizartekintza@gipuzkoa.eus

Environment and Waterworks  
Department

**943 112 919**

florenzo@gipuzkoa.eus

Citizens' advice service

**943 112 111**