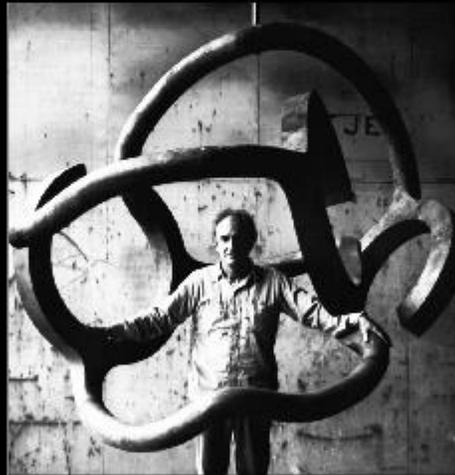




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# Eduardo CHILLIDA,

el espacio de las cosas





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**Exhibition: Eduardo Chillida**

**(San Sebastián / Donostia, Euskadi, Spain, 1924-2002).**

Considered one of the most important sculptors of the twentieth century, often compared to Henry Moore or Alexander Calder, Eduardo Chillida embarked upon his studies in architecture in Madrid in 1943, but quickly saw that sculpture was his true calling. He moved to Paris in 1948, where his work soon became recognized, and he began to delve into more abstract shapes, moving away from figuration. He returned to the Basque Country in 1951, where he led a revival of artistic forging and woodworking and went on to develop his most emblematic projects.

He came into contact with great artists such as Chagall, Picasso, Miró, Tàpies, Brancusi, Calder, and Palazuelo. His public works are present in countless cities across Europe and the Americas, and even as far afield as Iran, where his stela "Homage to Pablo Neruda" (1974) is exhibited. A few years later he installed his iconic sculpture complex *Peine del Viento* (Comb of the Wind) on the rocky San Sebastián shore looking out over the Cantabrian Sea. His works can be found in the collections of the world's most influential museums, he has been awarded countless prizes and distinctions, and he has held exhibitions in high-profile art centers.

Chillida was a great humanist and champion of the brotherhood of humanity and respect for diversity. His work is known for pushing materials to the limits of their properties, such as his positioning of space at the center of his focus, thus transforming the very idea of the sculptural discipline.

In 1984 he acquired the Zabala Caserío in Hernani with the aim of transforming it into the Chillida Leku Museum, which opened to the public in 2000, two years before his death.



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Eduardo Chillida made a studio of his native San Sebastián, creating a space in which he grew, meditated, and imagined. His works were not planned; a phrase, an idea, an intuition—all was captured in a variety of materials.

He began working with wood and iron, returning to traditional Basque Country methods. Later he worked with alabaster and added reinforced concrete as a sculptural material. However, he never ceased to draw on and work with paper, elaborating myriad forms by which to transmit the relationship with space that he expressed in his sculptural works.

Chillida knew that bringing the materials to where he needed them was not accident-free. The limits and intrinsic rebelliousness of the elements is something that the artist incorporated into his works, shaping a productive dialogue between idea and matter.

Having cut his teeth on the postulates of academia, he promptly abandoned the representative or classical in favor of abstraction which, according to him, is the only language capable of explaining human complexity.



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## TINDAYA



**Tindaya Mountain Natural Monument, La Oliva, Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, Spain**

**(never completed)**

“Years ago, an intuition came to me that, honestly, I saw as a utopia. To create a space within a mountain: a space that I wanted to offer to all humanity, of all races and colors. A great sculpture for tolerance.” (Eduardo Chillida)

This dream found its home at Tindaya, a mountain in Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands. Tindaya is a mound of trachyte rock surrounded by a plain and is considered sacred by the native peoples of the area, as attested by the hundreds of podomorph engravings found there.

Chillida saw the project from a high-level perspective. A void would be created by the removal of large blocks of stone, which would be made available for other works. Access to the interior would be via a tunnel only passable on foot. This would lead to a room illuminated, by means of two vertical shafts, by the passage of solar or lunar rays, such that the space would change depending on the light conditions.

The project contains all the elements that characterize Chillida's work: emptiness, space, light, scale. His intention was to leave the 50-meter-high room in the state in which the stonemasons would leave it once they had finished removing the mountain's innards.



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## ELOGIO DEL HORIZONTE / IN PRAISE OF THE HORIZON



**Cerro de Santa Catalina, Gijón**

**Spain, 1990**

**Reinforced concrete**

**10 x 12 x 15 meters**

**500 tons**

“The horizon becomes the world from the perspective of men. Looking at it the way I see it, it could be the homeland of all men.” (Eduardo Chillida)

Chillida mulled extensively on the idea of the horizon during his travels along the Atlantic coast. He realized that the points from which the horizon was best appreciated were the fortresses built to guard against enemy attack. By chance, Gijón City Council commissioned him for a work for the Santa Catalina hill, which had been restored as a public space.

The sculpture reflects on the immensity of the horizon through its monumentality. Within it, the human scale is dwarfed, and standing at the center of the ellipse it is possible to hear the echo of the sea. This effect was never intentional, Chillida himself confesses, but upon noticing it, he requested that a naturally worn area of grass should indicate the exact spot from which the sound could be heard.



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## PLAZA DE LOS FUEROS



Vitoria-Gasteiz, Álava

Spain, 1978-1982

Monument to the *Fueros*

Stela VII

Corten Steel

1.69 x 0.98 x 1.06 meters

4 tons

This collaboration between Chillida and architect Luis Peña Canchegui was installed on the site of the former Plaza de Abastos, which closed in 1974.

The monument commemorates the old *fueros*—a system of administration and legislation used in the Basque Country and Navarra.

The project covers an area of 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> and includes a silhouette map of Álava built in pink granite and reminiscent of a maze. Inside is a Corten steel sculpture (Stela VII).

This interior piece echoes typical Basque ironwork and woodwork. Installed in a pit reached via a descending staircase, it obeys his desire to create a space inside the materials with which he worked—in this case, the plaza itself.



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## BUSCANDO LA LUZ / IN SEARCH OF THE LIGHT



**Chillida Leku, Hernani, Guipúzcoa**

**Spain, 1997**

**Steel**

**8 x 3 x 3 meters each**

**22 tons**

Chillida made several versions of this work, all of them in the form of stelae that rise towards the sky. Each stela is made up of three asymmetrical steel sheets, so that the sculpture differs depending on the angle from which it is viewed. From the rear one sees an imposing mass, while at the front an empty space invites the onlooker to position themselves within the work. Once inside, the high undulating steel walls give dynamism to the work, forcing one to look up in search of light, whether physical, poetic, or spiritual.

For Chillida, light became an architectural element, as it is light that highlights spaces. But there is also black light, which the artist claimed as his own: a light that purifies the soul; a positive light that follows the German, Indian, Eastern, and Christian mystical tradition, and that Chillida claims to have followed.



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## ELOGIO DEL AGUA / IN PRAISE OF WATER



### **Creueta del Coll Park, Barcelona**

**Spain, 1987**

**Reinforced concrete**

**12 x 7.2 x 6.5 meters**

**54 tons**

During the great transformation of Barcelona in readiness to host the 1992 Olympic Games, artists from all over the world were invited to put their mark on public spaces. These works would remain in the city forever.

Chillida was one such artist. Among the locations offered to him was a disused quarry on one of the city's hills, which would be converted into a park. The artist designed a mobile cement structure suspended from four steel cables. The piece is anchored to the walls of the quarry and hangs over an artificial pool of water. According to the author: "I do half of the sculpture; the other half is done by the water."

On one hand, *In Praise of Water* alludes to the myth of Narcissus and his reflection, and, on the other, struggles with the law of gravity, movement, and the force of matter in space.



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## GRAVITACIONES / GRAVITATIONS



These works consist of multiple pieces of paper assembled and suspended from string, which allows light to flow between them and reveals the space within. The cuts form boundaries and are sometimes reinforced with black spots, lines, or indentations that accentuate the relationship between the inside and the outside—an ever-present feature of Chillida's work.

The pieces are not linked to any specific sculpture, although all of the artist's works bear a common thread that leads us from one to the next. They are a "notebook" of essays on his reflections: space, boundary, and gravity.

Chillida called them "his chamber work." They originated with the book that he published with Heidegger in 1968, in which he made a series of "lithocollages," which became a preface to the gravitations that he showed publicly for the first time in 1988.



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## MANOS / HANDS



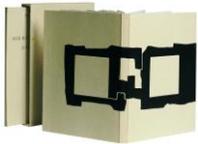
Hands were a recurring theme in Chillida's work. Initially they constituted a technical exercise to which he later added greater complexity by switching to the left hand from the right, with which he had already achieved perfection. According to him, this was how he freed himself from technical automation and was able to reflect on drawing.

These hands, according to the artist, "...embody and articulate, in the movement of the fingers, all the possibilities of space." They are neither portraits nor virtuositities on a subject; what interests him is the space that these hands attempt to capture and which slips through the fingers.



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## BOOKS



### HEIDEGGER

When Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) wrote his essay *Die Kunst und der Raum* (Art and Space) in 1968, the editor suggested that it be illustrated by an artist. Heidegger was not convinced by either Picasso or Giacometti.

At a presentation by Chillida in Zurich, the philosopher and the sculptor met and exchanged ideas and reflections. Heidegger soon invited Chillida to become involved in his publishing project.

The artist requested that the book be made in the same format and size that the philosopher usually used for his writings. He convinced the publisher to make a small format book and the philosopher to write the text on lithographic stones.

Chillida made a series of "lithocollages," or paper assemblies, to illustrate the text. The book is a materialization of the two men's shared reflections on space and art.

### GUILLEN

Eduardo Chillida and the Spanish poet Jorge Guillén (1893-1984) met in 1971 when the sculptor was invited to the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University in Massachusetts, USA, and an intense friendship was born.

When Guillén discovered that Chillida had published a book with Heidegger, the poet joked: "I warn you, Chillida, that I also have very good handwriting," thus inviting him to write a book together.

This was the first book on which Guillén and Chillida collaborated. Their friendship was a great motivation to the sculptor, who, inspired by a verse written by Guillén—"how profound is the air"—paid him various posthumous artistic tributes following the poet's death.

### KAHN

This book was inspired by Chillida's interest in the work of the American architect Louis Isadore Kahn (1901-1974).

It was published by The Dalí Museum and the Eduardo Chillida - Pilar Belzunce<sup>1</sup> Foundation in 2017 and presented for the first time in Europe on the occasion of the exhibition, as a posthumous work by the two of them.

It is the first book by the artist to accompany the thought of an architect and is one of the 23 published during his lifetime in conjunction with various poets, philosophers, and artists.

It consists of a selection of texts by Louis I. Kahn and a series of engravings made in relief, without ink, from plates approved by Eduardo Chillida in 1993. The process, supervised by Ignacio Chillida, Eduardo's son, was for the most part carried out in the Basque Country and Barcelona.

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<sup>1</sup> Chillida's wife.