

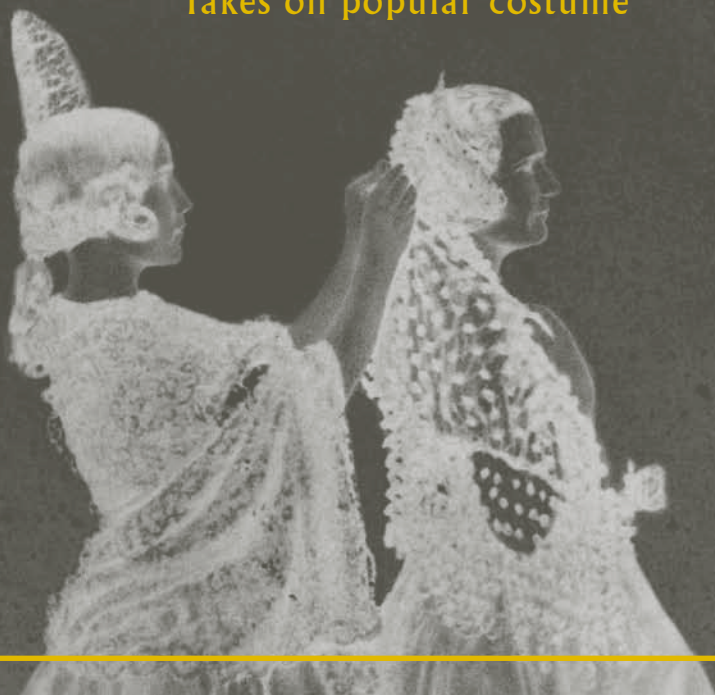
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CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA MUSEOA

ORTIZ ECHAGÚE
BALENCIAGA

CHARBON
ET VELOURS —
COAL
AND VELVET

Les regards au costume populaire
Takes on popular costume



**COAL AND VELVET.
TAKES ON POPULAR COSTUME FROM ORTIZ ECHAGÜE
AND BALENCIAGA**

7 OCTOBER 2016 - 7 MAY 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Carbon and Velvet” explores the artistic-documentary vision and aesthetic revision of traditional attire by Cristóbal Balenciaga, in his Haute Couture creations, and by Ortiz Echagüe in his photographic portraits of traditional Spain.

The work of these two artists converses to offer interpretations of a reality, that of the traditional costume, which ceased to exist as far back as the early decades of the 20th century and to which both, through works of undeniable artistic quality, lend validity and a timeless quality.

Photography and fashion come together in this context to pay tribute to the traditional costume, to its universal values, and to the work of two artists who skilfully reinterpreted tradition and used it as a source of creativity and innovation.

2. EXHIBITION

The title “Carbon and Velvet” refers to elements inextricably linked to the trades and knowhow of the two names headlining this exhibition: José Ortiz Echagüe and Cristóbal Balenciaga. Carbon forms part of the photographic printing technique used by Echagüe and refers to the dark black, predominant in articles of traditional attire, for which Balenciaga had great predilection. Not to forget its connection to the primary sector, to the harshness of the earth, to work in the fields. Velvet, in contrast, is a luxurious fabric, favoured by the well-to-do classes. A material specific to the context of haute couture used by Balenciaga on many occasions.

During the tour of the exhibition and the three galleries in which more than 80 works by Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga are exhibited, visitors will discover the takes of these artists on the traditional costume, and the way each of them, from their discipline, set about updating and reinterpreting it.

The thread of the exhibition is precisely the traditional costume, an element which, although not physically present in the galleries (there are no regional costumes on display), provides the backbone of the discourse and marks the itinerary, lending a theme to each room, each display cabinet. Thus, the first room contains a presentation of the basic elements of traditional costume, elements which, while they may have different geographical interpretations, share qualities of universal validity. The second room is dedicated to the subject “Clothes for Work”, where the traditional costume is shown adapted to the trades and jobs of the rural world and primary sector economy. Lastly, the third room focuses on the subject of “Clothes for Celebrations” where functionality gives way to the finery worn in honour of religious and non-religious feast days and celebrations.

The exhibition occupies the second floor of the main building and will be open to the public from 7 October 2016 until 7 May 2017.

Historical and cultural context

From the exhibition point of view, the traditional costume is a reality which gained special prominence with the birth and development of photography. In the case of Spain, the first photographers, moved by the romantic idea that it was a place where remains of the ancient Muslim civilisation continued to exist, travelled to the southern provinces to take photographs of those traces of the Arab world. In addition to the monuments, they discovered the landscape as well as the originality of the clothes worn by the people they met on the way. Those travelling photographers gradually extended their sphere of action towards more inaccessible areas by heading northwards, discovering that the Spain of the time was far more diversified than they had, *a priori*, believed. There was undoubtedly enormous wealth and diversity in the traditions and, particularly, in the manners of dressing of the inhabitants of zones located at a great distance from one another given the lack of communications. The traditional costume therefore became a reality to be documented.

In the early 20th century there was an extraordinary movement to safeguard traditional attire, particularly advocated by the intelligentsia of the '98 Generation, which also had an influence on the world of art. Masters of painting, such as Zuloaga and Sorolla, portrayed in their pictures this reality of the traditional costume, while José Ortiz Echagüe (1886-1980) was outstanding in the field of photography. Echagüe reached beyond the merely documentary aspect to make an art of photographing traditional costume.

Cristobal Balenciaga (1895-1972) shared the objective to recover the memory of traditional costume. The couturier studied the reality of traditional attire, extrapolating it from the context of its space-time coordinates to turn it into ultra-modern international haute couture.

Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga: a shared context

The first professional steps taken by Balenciaga as a couturier and by Ortiz Echagüe as a photography enthusiast coincided with the rise in the so-called '98 Generation. This group consisted of intellectuals, writers and artists, with different sensitivities, but with a shared line of critical thought regarding the situation affecting the country in the early decades of the 20th century. According to them, the loss of the colonies in 1898 had been nothing but the culmination of a degeneration process rooted in an imperial past, in industrial and scientific backwardness, in administrative and economic corruption, etc. Those intellectuals believed that the construction of a new reality had to be built on a return to our origins, origins which in their opinion lay in the rural world and in the landscape, realities that were as yet uncorrupted. It was a time, at the end of the day, when the desire was for a more modern Spain, but in which there was also a tangible need to recover that tradition, hidden in the different corners of the country, which was in its last throes and had to be documented if it wasn't to be forgotten.

In this context, the traditional costume developed into a symbol of Spain at its most authentic and of its people. People in costumes became a subject regularly portrayed by painters, the public press, and photographers, and even the aristocracy would dress in typical costume to celebrate their special occasions. It became a lure, a resource used by the government to promote tourism in the country.

Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga joined that trend and lent expression to popular attire in their creations. Both succeeded in going beyond their trades to turn their work into art and endow it with a contemporary feel still valid today.

Ortiz Echagüe

José Ortiz Echagüe cultivated his work on the popular costume from an artistic point of view, not simply documentary. The photographer used pictorialist techniques to create an ethnographic work. Ortiz Echagüe spent a great deal of his free time in the 1910s and 1920s taking photographs of traditional costumes, published with the title *España. Tipos y Trajes* in 1930.

Echagüe was one of those first explorers, meticulous portrait artists of the things they would see, among whom we must highlight pioneers including Jean Laurent Minier and other contemporaries of Echagüe such as Martin Chambi, Kurt Hielscher and Ruth Mathilda Anderson. As he himself would say on recovery of the traditional costume “here we can see a piece of treasure which is fast becoming an art on the verge of disappearance. Only photography with its ease of reproduction has the ability to capture it before it goes”.

Part of the success enjoyed by his photographs is due to his developing process, direct carbon on *fresson* paper. This paper had a fine layer of gelatin to which black pigment would be added to make it light sensitive: in the parts of the image receiving less light, the gelatin remained soft, while the parts receiving more light became hard. Thus, on washing the copy in water – with sawdust to cause friction on the paper – the soft gelatin with the pigment was eliminated, leaving white areas, while the parts in hardened gelatin produced the black colour. An image would therefore appear on the paper with black and white textures. While the paper was still damp, Ortiz Echagüe would emphasize the contrasts of these colours using paintbrushes or scrapers, obtaining unique photographic copies that have contributed to his fame as an artisan of the image.

Short biography

1886- Born in Guadalajara

1903- Starts studying at the Academy of Military Engineers in Guadalajara.

1907- Takes a portrait shot of Alfonso XIII. First appearance in an international publication (*Photographs of the Year*).

1915- First Prize in the Fine Arts Circle National Competition

1916- Starts working on his project “Types and Costumes”

1925- The *Camera Craft* magazine dedicates an extensive article to him.

1929- Exhibition in Berlin. Publishes *Spanische Köpfe*

- 1933-** Publishes *España. Tipos y trajes* with his own publishing house (preface by Ortega y Gasset)
- 1935-** Exhibition at the Royal Photographic Society in London
- 1939-** Publishes *Tipos y trajes de España* (preface by Azorín)
- 1943-** Publishes *España Mística*
- 1949-** Exhibition at the Milan Photographic Circle. Exhibition in San Sebastian organised by the Photographic Society of Gipuzkoa
- 1952-** Exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington
- 1956-** Publishes *España. Castillos y Alcázares*
- 1960-** *Spectacular Spain* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York
- 1969-** Takes his last photographs
- 1980-** Dies in Madrid

Balenciaga

From his Parisian establishment in 1937, the couturier produced myriad readings of the basic articles of traditional Spanish attire. "The cape and the cloak, for example, exist in very different versions in most of his collections; for evening wear, they are made in luxurious fabrics such as velvet and gauze, and for day wear in woollen cloth," says Ana Balda, curator of the exhibition.

But in addition, over and above the interpretation of a specific piece, there is a conceptual connotation. After World War II, Balenciaga created looser-fitting silhouettes than those of his competitors – particularly when compared to Dior's marked *New Look* silhouette of 1947 – which became more polished, sculptural and minimalistic with the passing of the decades. These alternative silhouettes – above all those developed in the 1940s and 1950s – largely took their inspiration from the silhouette of the basic items of the traditional Spanish costume: the cloak-skirt ensemble and the cape.

Balenciaga's predilection for black is also related to the tradition of popular Spanish attire. The backdrop of Spain's rural world in the 19th and early 20th centuries; the colour of the cape, the cloak and the skirt, was, in the main, black. A black which tended with use towards brownish-grey colours, which Balenciaga also liked to use. In 1938, *Harper's Bazaar* published "in Balenciaga black is so black that it hits you like a blow. Thick Spanish black, almost velvety, a night without stars, which makes the ordinary black seem almost gray".

On the other hand, two important documentary sources confirm that the couturier consciously developed this aesthetic. The first of these is the book *El traje regional de España* by Isabel de Palencia, kept in the archives of today's Maison Balenciaga in Paris. This is a work published in 1925, the main objective of which, as expressed by Palencia herself in its preface, is to make a study of the traditional costume including a combination of explanatory texts and photographs. Balenciaga used the book as inspiration to create his collections.

The second source is the collection of historical attire, belonging to Balenciaga

himself and currently kept at the *Musée de la mode de la Ville de Paris. Palais Galliera*. Throughout his professional life, the couturier amassed a large number of pieces of historical attire, which he would purchase at *brocante* vintage markets and antique shops in Paris and Madrid. This collection includes pieces of French attire from the 18th and 19th centuries; however, particularly important are a number of pieces of traditional Spanish attire.

Short biography

1895- Born in Getaria

1917- Opens his first boutique in San Sebastián

1937- Opens his first boutique in Paris

Women's Wear Daily highlights the "subtle Spanish influence" of Balenciaga's first Parisian collection (9/8/1937)

1937-1968- Includes in his collections pieces taking their inspiration from traditional Spanish costumes and religious aesthetics, researching and collecting traditional Spanish and international attire

1938- *Harper's Bazaar* writes: "There's a Spanish feel to his whole collection. The dramatic cloqué cape in crêpe lined with velvet is severe, of intense black and cut with a strange looseness that culminates in a flounce" (1/10/1938)

1949- A red and black dress, reminiscent of the skirt worn in traditional Castilian attire, features on the cover of the December issue of *Harper's Bazaar*

1950- A black cape, similar to the attire of the *tapadas* or covered women from the town of Vejer, features on the cover of the November issue of *Harper's Bazaar*

1964- A coat reflecting the garment worn by the shepherds in Navarra, which Balenciaga complements with a hat highlighting the pilgrim's scallop shell, features on the cover of the November issue of the French edition of *Vogue*

1968- Announces his retirement from the world of fashion and closes his boutiques

1972- Dies in Jávea

3. DIALOGUES

The exhibition addresses various parallelisms and encounters between the work of Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga. We can highlight the following dialogues around their respective takes on the traditional costume:

THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE TRADITIONAL COSTUME

The basic elements of the traditional costume draw on the cape, for male attire, and the cloak and the skirt for the female version, with their offshoots. These elements, while they may have different geographical reflections, also have qualities of universal validity.

THE CAPE

The pattern of the traditional Spanish cape, based on the geometry of the semicircle, was the object of exhaustive experimentation by Balenciaga.

Conceived in woollen cloth for day wear and in velvet or taffeta for evening wear, Balenciaga contributed to reinforcing the timelessness of this historical item of traditional attire.

Balenciaga transcends gender codes on introducing the cape, a garment traditionally linked to the male world, to the wardrobes of his haute couture clientele. **(See document attached 1-2-3 ref).**

THE CLOAK AND THE SKIRT

Balenciaga interpreted the humble cloak in numerous collections. Silk and lace substitute rough wool in this example, with similarities to those of the water carriers portrayed by Ortiz Echagüe. **(See document attached 4-5 ref).**

The embroidered motifs of this cocktail outfit recall the wealth of Spanish embroidery, much like the work made in Candelaria. **(See document attached 6-7 ref).**

WORKING CLOTHES

Functionality, usage and practicality have always marked the forms and fabrics of traditional attire. The inclemencies of the sea, the harshness of the mountain, the distinction and dignity required to represent a civil or religious institution, and the specific nature of certain positions, have defined precise costumes which have served to distinguish between the activity of those wearing them.

FISHING

Balenciaga's origins inspired his creations. The Cantabrian Sea, its colours, and the attire worn by fishermen – their wide tunics, those thick caps that protected them from the rain – is reflected in his work. The jersey polo shirts of the oarsmen permitted the fast and easy movement of their shoulders and arms. The couturier interpreted this piece introducing the "unisex" concept; the white one belonged to Bunny Mellon, and the blue one to Balenciaga himself. **(See document attached 8-9 ref).**

THE HABIT

After the Spanish Civil War, Ortiz Echagüe started taking an interest in other kinds of costume: religious habits. This new subject gave rise to a series which he published in 1943 with the title *España Mística*. The aesthetic of these photographs, highlighting the white, light-filled silhouettes of the monks, underscores Echagüe's penchant for the play on volumes and his use of geometry to create artistically balanced compositions, which consolidated him in his facet of timeless transmitter of tradition.

In the decade of the 1960s, Balenciaga went as far as to convert his designs into an absolute purity of lines in which we can see how he substituted traditional for religious iconography. Like Ortiz Echagüe, the couturier evolved in his interest and, based on the traditional costume that had inspired him, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, continued to follow his creative path with the focus on religious attire. The dress reflects Balenciaga's preference for unfussy, minimalist silhouettes, such as those of Ortiz Echagüe's Carthusian monks, while reflecting his creative ability to conceive patterns with the emphasis on geometry and the play on superimposed planes. And, above all else, it reflects Balenciaga's enormous dexterity when it came to turning tradition into state-of-the-art fashion. **(See document attached 10-11ref).**

CLOTHES FOR FESTIVE OCCASIONS

Popular clothing changes its appearance, acquiring improved shape, colours and textures when its wearers stop working to rest and have fun at fairs and processions or to take part in religious feast days and ceremonies. Dressing for an occasion means flaunting the cultural identity and artisan tradition typical of each area, which is why these garments are closer to the regional stereotype than any other.

THE APRIL FAIR

Balenciaga minimalizes and modernizes the flamenco dress, removing sleeves and flounces and substituting the simple percale fabric for sophisticated silk gazar. **(See document attached 12-13 ref).**

EASTER

The asymmetrical cut and profuse silver thread embroidery recall in this model by Balenciaga the ecclesiastical vestments of the Easter floats, such as this "Dolorosa" portrayed by Echagüe. **(See document attached 14-15 ref).**

4. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED TO THE EXHIBITION

Throughout his professional career, Cristóbal Balenciaga drew on diverse and hugely varied sources and references for his inspiration, taking a close look, among others, at the possibilities of traditional attire as a source of creativity. The designer from Getaria studied the reality of traditional attire, extrapolating it from the context of its space-time coordinates to turn it into ultra-modern international haute couture.

In this respect, the exhibition will be complemented with courses and activities intended to expand its focus and generate a wealthier context as regards facets and points of view, from the perspective of history, modern day, and the trends of tomorrow.

Course on design processes. Tradition and craftwork in the creative processes of contemporary fashion

In this context, and from a modern perspective, this theoretical-practical course will focus on applying and adapting the techniques and aesthetics used to create traditional fabric to the new processes of creating fashion. From 3-6 November, Elisa Palomino, designer and professor at the prestigious Central Saint Martins school in London, will give this course for fashion artists, designers, students and professionals. The course is organised with the YOX studio and has the collaboration of Kutxa Kultur Moda.

Family and *Do it Yourself* workshops

Furthermore, a number of family activities will be programmed such as the workshop *Become a super designer* (20 November). The participants in this initiative will have the opportunity to discover and explore some of the works on display in the temporary exhibition *Carbon and velvet: Takes on traditional costume by Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga*, comparing them with traditional garments created for the purpose by CAPAS SESEÑA (Madrid). Working as a team and helped by the adults, they will also design and create a cape, a traditional garment for which the couturier Balenciaga had great predilection.

As well as the above, another two events will run for adults related to traditional attire and falling within the DIY trend: the former to create and interpret a head piece with designer Gill Connon (26 and 27 November), and the latter to create and interpret a kimono (17 and 18 December) with the artist Virginia Ameztoy.

5. CURATORSHIP AND COLLABORATORS

Curatorship:

Ana Balda.

Graduate in Business Administration and PhD in Communication from the University of Navarra. Having achieved wide experience in the field of business administration, Ana redirected her professional career towards the world of fashion with a doctoral dissertation on the communication policy at the Maison Balenciaga. Her areas of specialisation are fashion history, fashion press and photography. Author of numerous scientific and informative articles, she currently teaches *History of Fashion through the specialised press* as part of the International Communication and Fashion Programme at the Communication Faculty of the University of Navarra. She combines teaching and research with consultancy for fashion brands.

Igor Uria, Collections Director at the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, associate curator.

Collaborators:

The exhibition, framed within the San Sebastian 2016 "Conversations" programme, has the collaboration of the Museo Universidad de Navarra and the photographs in direct carbon on *fresson* paper appearing in the exhibition belong to its collection.

6. BALENCIAGA UP CLOSE EXPERIENCE

To celebrate the opening of the exhibition, Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa offers a unique opportunity for people from Pamplona, Vitoria and Bilbao to discover the birthplace of Balenciaga and the museum dedicated to the couturier.

The experience includes a return bus service from said cities, a guided tour of the Museum with the opportunity to discover the exhibition "Carbon and velvet. Takes on traditional costume by Ortiz Echagüe and Balenciaga" and a visit to the old town of Getaria accompanied by expert guides.

Duration: A full day

Pamplona – From 09:30 to 18:00 approx.

Vitoria-Gasteiz and Bilbao - From 10:30 to 18:30 approx.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, Aldamar Parkea 6, 20808 Getaria

Contact: 943 00 88 40
info@cristobalbalenciagamuseoa.com

Opening hours

MARCH-MAY AND OCTOBER

From Tuesday to Friday 10:00-17:00
Weekends and holidays 10:00-19:00

NOVEMBER-FEBRUARY

From Tuesday to Friday 10:00-15:00
Weekends and holidays 10:00-17:00

Admission

GENERAL €10

FREE Museum Friends, Children (until 9 years), ICOM members

10% DISCOUNT Groups of over 10 people and large families

REDUCED Youth (until 18 years) Retirees and pensioners Students Teachers
Unemployed

Tours

Guided tours with a mediator

The Museum organises free guided tours on weekends and holidays. Visitors must sign up for these tours individually at the Museum reception before the tour departs. Places are on a first come, first served basis (maximum 20 people). Tours are only open to those who have paid for admission.

Times Morning 12:30 Afternoon 15:30 (November-February) 17:00 (October & March-May)

Languages Basque – Saturday morning session and Sunday afternoon session
Spanish – Saturday afternoon session and Sunday morning session Holidays –
Please check the language

Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa

The Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum, opened on 7 June 2011 in the town of Getaria, Gipuzkoa, is the first major museum of its kind in the world exclusively dedicated to a couturier. It has the mission to inform on and highlight the importance of the figure and work of the brilliant designer as regards artistic creation in general and in the world of fashion and haute couture in particular.

The Museum houses the most relevant international collection of creations by Cristóbal Balenciaga, given not only the number and quality of the pieces it contains, but also the extensive period it encompasses.

In the Museum spaces, as well as exhibitions of a representative selection of his collections organised on a rotation basis, there are temporary exhibitions on subjects related to fashion plus educational and leisure activities.

For more information:
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