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PRESS DOSSIER

The rides are back!

A project developed by the artist Saioa Olmo (Ideatomics)
and the art producer Arte Consonni

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The rides are back!

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1. Introduction to ¡Vuelven las atracciones!

General Description

The Bizkaia Theme Park first opened its doors on September 14th, 1974 and was finally closed down in 1990. Today, one can only envisage the long lost rides, such as the big wheel, the rollercoaster, the Ghost Train, the Octopus or the Crazy Worm. You can still imagine restaurant up and running, there are trays ready to be served, chairs scattered around with an uncanny logic ... The fantasy scenes are gradually being taken over by overgrowth. An area once dedicated to fun and entertainment, which although still neglected, continues to be alive with the new attraction of that which has long ago been abandoned.

Seventeen years after closing its doors, during the weekends in the month of October, from the 4th to the 28th, the Artxanda Theme Park is to reopen. This is probably the last opportunity to set foot again in this memorable park.

The rides are back! This is a project which has been developed by the artist Saioa Olmo (Ideatomics) and the art producer Arte Consonni, produced by Consonni will see the park temporarily reopened for guided tours of 10 new attractions, which have appeared out of the blue, and represent both a physical and symbolic route. The Menacing Lair, The Spaceship, The House of the Forgotten Fantasies, Treasures of the 20th Century, The Parliament of the, United Fun Rides, The Amphibious Experience, The Paradise Cruise, The Wild Stampede, The Lost Jungle The Tower of Memories.

The why and wherefore of ¡Vuelven las atracciones!

Consonni had previously worked on another project with the theme park as a setting. Starting in 2005 and until July 2007, consonni produced a project called Luna Park, designed by the freelance organizers Alexis Vaillant, Lisette Smith and, Franck Larcade, who was director of consonni at that time. Seven international artists, (Bruno Serralongue, Olaf Breuning, Barbara Bisser, Petra Mrzyk & Jean-François Moriceau, Takeki Maeda & Jay Chung, Melvin Motti y Andreas Dobler) were invited to take part in Luna Park. Each artist captured his or her specific perception of the park in a photograph or on video. The guided tours began as a communications strategy for Luna Park, but ended up as a new autonomous and independent project. Saioa Olmo, the artist, was thus invited to work with consonni on the creative input for the project. Special emphasis has been placed on the park as an attraction in its current situation and on considering what makes a show and what makes a ride. And that explains the name ¡Vuelven las atracciones!

Will there be any refurbishing of the park or will it remain as it is?

The idea is to show the park as it is, dismantled, in disuse. With the rides having disappeared and time conquering the space, rust and mould have created new attractions. The park does not need to be touched up or cleaned to reveal a place that symbolises the exuberance of a Bilbao full of expectancy in the Seventies and the Bilbao of broken dreams in the crisis of the Eighties. The prelude to the change from an industrial city to a service city. It is a place that evokes an era, a change in the economic model that is now firmly in place with the show as the flagship. Contemporary ruins as the allegory of a drugged economy and the traces of failed mass tourism. Art has reacted very differently towards ruins. The Baroque Art of the 17th Century broadly portrayed ruins as a setting. During the Enlightenment, ruins would suggest the fragility of the human being. Romanticism restored the ruin and from the 19th century onwards, it became the vestige of a historical period and archaeology emerged. Nowadays, the cities, driven by hedonism, seek beauty and immaculate appearance, and flee from anything in ruins. This project, like other artistic proposals, is looking for a way to activate the historical memory and escape from nostalgia.

What is the objective?

The idea is to reveal a place that has been closed for 17 years to those people who did not know it and, above all, to awaken the memories of all those people who went there when they were children or adolescents or with their children, and to spotlight a park that has been forcibly renewed by the passing of time. The aim is also to show that creative acts are possible without significant economic investment and without turning them into an art showcase. Contrary to the current trend of cleaning up the cities, it is unveiled as a place as it has been left by obscurity and given another use. The idea is to show that the dismantled park, without its bumper cars, the big wheel or the remains of its old rides, has new spontaneous rides that awaken the interest and imagination of the many different visitors.

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Cast

¡Vuelven las atracciones! This is a project which has been developed by the artist Saioa Olmo (Ideatomics) and the art producer Arte Consonni, produced by Consonni with the collaboration of the Diputación Foral de Bizkaia (through its Department of Culture, Department of Inland Revenue and Finance and Department of Transport), the Basque Government (Department of Culture) and Norbega.

Creative Team:

Saioa Olmo
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General Production:

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Coordinación de producción: María Salazar

General Graphic Design:

Saioa Olmo

Translations:

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Printers:

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For the Opening:

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Video production: Saioa Olmo

Video editing: Ubiqua

For the guided tours:

Fauna and flora study: Asociación Izate

Cleaning the park: Garbiketa

Guides: Aiora Kintana y Garikoitz Fraga

Transport:

www.vuelvenlasatracciones.com :

Raquel Meyers

Hosting: St3

Illustrations: Roberto Bergado

2. Aspects of ¡Vuelven las atracciones!

2.1 The Opening

On 14th September 1974, the Bizkaia Theme Park was originally opened, before it disappeared and was resuscitated 33 years later.

On 14th September 2007, at 23.00 hours, a video showing fireworks in the theme park will be shown on a large screen in the **Plaza del Arriaga (Bilbao)**, to commemorate the original opening and the temporary reopening in October this year.

Fireworks will again lit up Bilbao, leaflets will be distributed, along with information on how to sign up for the guided tours.

2.2 Guided tours

The tours will begin on 4th October and continue until Sunday 28th October.

Visits in groups of 20 people. Prior booking is required. Visits only take place when there is a sufficient number of people. For safety reasons, only those over 16 are allowed.

Opening times: Every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday in October.
Thursday and Friday: 7pm
Saturday and Sunday: 11 am and 6 pm

Languages available: Basque, Spanish and English. Visits in Basque will be available on Friday 5th at 19.00 hours, Saturday 6th at 11.00, Thursday 18th at 19.00 and Sunday 28th at 18.00 hours.

Bus departures: from the San Nicolás Church in the Casco Viejo (Old Quarters) of Bilbao.

Price: 3 € per person.

How to book: call + 34 94 443 23 90, with a 24-hour answering service for booking visits. The number will be staffed from 10.00 to 14.00 on Tuesdays and from 16.00 to 20.00 on Wednesdays. Visits can only be booked online at www.vuelvenlasatracciones.com The organisers will then contact the people who have booked to confirm their attendance.

Discover the attractions of the Old Artxanda Theme Park as it is today. Visit the park and its 10 new attractions, which have appeared out of the blue, and represent both a physical and symbolic route.

The Menacing Lair

A spine chilling enclosure with an entrance made of iron stairs. Those of you who dare to venture in will soon discover that you are not alone. The dim lights inside will allow you to see shadows flying acrobatically overhead. Apparitions that lie in wait. The flapping wings. These are the Little Menaces.

The Menacing Lair is the natural mutation of what once was the Haunted House. A small building designed by the architects of the park, with the help of darkness to create an unleashed fear.

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The Spaceship

A spaceship with a clear mission: to preserve the past and present of the planet Earth. Among its relics it has a huge egg which is watchfully and mindfully incubated in bracken, awaiting the birth of the creature.

This vehicle of the future was once one of the most popular cafes in the park. It offered a self-service restaurant and a terrace. Food and drink, like in today's modern day large-scale entertainment centres, was an essential part of the park.

The House of the Forgotten Fantasies

Fantasies were lost in the winds. Our dreams packed up their fluorescent coloured bags and fled in sorrow, leaving behind utter chaos. This lazy and sleepy chaos does not rise early in the morning, nor is tidiness one of its virtues, it leaves its beard grow long until it has no other option other than to cut it so as not to trip over it.

The House of the Fantasies was the peaceful abode of Cinderella and little dwarfs made of cloth and tinsel. The alienating utopia of this world of fantasy to which one has to escape, has been shattered into a million pieces.

Treasures of the 20th century

A computer expert, frightened by the madness of the 21st century, has decided to hide away in a labyrinth of features from 20th century society. In a fetish and desperate desire to halt the progress of life, he collects some very strange objects.

Bus stops, a phone booth, tyres, lorries, purposeless machinery One of the current uses of the park is a Warehouse for the Diputación de Bizkaia.

The Parliament of the United Fun Attractions

The attractions in the park were disassembled and sold off. Some decided to stay and created their own Republic with a Parliament where they could take decisions on a new situation of a spontaneous attraction. Some of them, although they were pale and had broken down, continue to live the dream of people clapping and cheering and like a prima donna who does not want to admit her decadence, parade with thread bare costumes which they believe to be full of luxury.

The amphitheatre was once a stage, at a time when there were very few concert halls in Bilbao.

The Amphibious Experience

The common frog is fed up of all the attention the toad is getting because when he is kissed he becomes a prince. The toad is only admired because of what he can become although the majority of these never go beyond their amphibious form. Therefore, the frogs in the park have conquered the swimming pool and after a very efficient political campaign have reinstated themselves as the group of presidents of the Republic.

The appearance of brambles and plants which were carefully distributed for decoration, today grow in total freedom and have taken over the whole area.

The Paradise Cruise

Legend has it that the true cause for the current situation in the park is the painting that an artist gave to the female captain of a ship. She threw it away in the park and the abandoned painting started to alter its own image and that of the park itself, converting an idyllic setting into a place of destruction and dereliction. Still today you can admire the painting in its setting.

Close to the swimming pool we find another cafeteria with the changing rooms, ticket office and showers, which reminds us of the inexorable passing of time and the closing down of the park. The ruins of an uncertain future.

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The Wild Stampede

When the park closed, the animals that lived there were moved to other places or simply fled. But there are two of them who have decided not to leave. A majestic lioness, a descendant of renowned prestige, and its faithful servant, "Osopardo" (The Brown Bear), are still here.

The mini zoo was the predecessor of this attraction. A concrete building that once housed a wide selection of animals (wolves, lions, cranes, eagles). The aim of the park was to attract the widest selection of public (adults and children).

Indoor Jungle

Plant life grows freely throughout the park but in this area, with its own greenhouse effect, the vegetation has mutated and has produced numerous species with sufficient autonomy and movement to be able to take over the land. This is the shelter for hybrids and mutations which cannot find their natural place among the traditional flora.

This Indoor Jungle was once upon a time a luxurious restaurant, which was run independently and which could be accessed from within the park or from the outside.

The Tower of Memories

Memories are more forthcoming if they are located high above. The Tower of Memories is the perfect place to recover those wonderful memories that have remained trapped within us and to abandon those evocations that one wishes to forget. The danger of frequenting this place too often is that you might be trapped by its nostalgic spell.

The Tower of Memories is what remains of the original park offices. The offices from which, like a Tower, overlook the whole park.

2.3 www.vuelvenlasatracciones.com

Once October is over, Internet will keep the project alive. The only way to access the theme park, once the visits are over, will be through the web site and the media.

At www.vuelvenlasatracciones.com, you can go on a virtual visit through the 3D drawings of Roberto Bergado, include photographs and comments about when the park was open (either from the people that used the park, or the ones that worked there and wish to share their memories) or how it is today (photographs that are taken during the visits). The website will also include a diversity of documents on different topics related to the project (from the history of the theme park to shows, as well as including other examples of alternative tourism or the perception of the ruin).

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3. Creators of ¡Vuelven las atracciones!

3.1 Saioa Olmo

Saioa Olmo works on artistic projects that deal with today's society and which aim to create opinions or provoke debate. An underlying theme of her projects is the search for people participation and a desire to reach a wide audience.

She does not work in a single specific discipline, but rather uses the appropriate people and media for each project. She has used a very wide range of media: communication campaigns, musical videos and songs, series of photographs, installations, publications, actions, event organisations, web sites and sculptures.

She regularly works with other people, groups, associations, companies or institutions, even though she also works individually. She has belonged to various collectives: Ateka, Abisal, Domenica's Collazione, Chi-gua-gua, Labitaciones, Foyu, Bubble Business y Pripublikarrak.

Particularly noteworthy among her recent projects is the seminar on projects that seek to foster substantial creative, environmental, ideological or social improvements... in their setting, "Futurize. Imagining the Society of the Future". There is also the project regarding branding and graphics relating to the idea of being Basque - Euskadi™ www.euskadi-tm.com. "Emancipator Bubble", the work that reflects on the housing problem www.emancipator.org and many different projects as a member of the feminist collective, Pripublikarrak (Galleteras. Memoria Activa. www.galleteras.net , Zergatik? / Why?, Coctelaciones / Koktelazioak and Optikak www.optikak.org)

3.2 consonni

Located in Bilbao, consonni is an art project producer. From 1997 onwards, consonni has invited artists to develop projects that do not adopt an aspect of the item exposed in space. They borrow those areas that modern life offers (fashion, music, identity, urban memory, communication methods , etc.), their very tools (a television programme, a fashion show, a typography auction etc) to subvert, criticise or simply reflect about the society in which we live. It is less visible as art, but seen by a wider audience. Silent and invisible, consonni opts for camouflage as the method of action and strategy for the artistic production.

Between 1997 to 2005, consonni produced over twenty artistic productions that have been showcased in exhibitions, fairs or artistic events in order fifteen different country. Particularly noteworthy are "Tetsuo Bound to Fail", the video by Sergio Prego; "El Gran Trueque", Matthieu Laurette's television contest; "La subasta internacional de las tipografías vascas Euskara" by Hinrich Sachs, the video recorded with hidden camera in the Guggenheim-Bilbao Museum, "Little Frank and his carp", by Andrea Fraser, the musical metamorphosis, Begoña by Begoña Muñoz and the fashion workshop/show/auction, "Segunda Mano, Bilbao Solo" by the Andrea Crews collective.