



filma
la película
the film
le film
sistiaga 1968/70

Exhibition - screening

From 15 June to 15 July 2007

Opening times: Wednesday to Sunday, from 11:00 to 13:00 and from 17:00 to 21:00

Press conference: 14 June. 11:00

Opening ceremony: 15 June. 19:30

Free guided tours: Fridays - 19:00 (Spanish) / Saturdays – Sundays 11:30 (Basque), 19:00 (Spanish)

Screening of the film *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*

Victoria Eugenia Theatre. 21 June. 20:00



Projection of *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...* in Tabacalera

Exhibition - screening

...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren... filma la película the film le film Sistiaga 1968/70

I appeal to the senses, the curiosity, and the feelings of my viewers, to their most secret depths, to they themselves. Take off your rationalist blindfold and enjoy the unknown with serenity -you will not be sorry. Do not fear, do not search for what you know in art, but rather look for that which will open up new avenues of perception.

José Antonio Sistiaga, 1990

Tabacalera presents the exhibition-screening of the experimental film *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*, created by the Basque artist José Antonio Sistiaga between 1968 and 1970. Painted directly onto the film strip, it is a daring creation, even nearly forty years after its making, that is on the crossroads between painting and film. The film boasts a long and distinguished international trajectory, to which Tabacalera wishes to pay tribute.

The exhibition in Tabacalera, organised by Alvaro Matxinbarrena, proposes a free screening of the film, suggested by the artist himself. Instead of using screens, *...ere erera...* will be projected onto the walls, roof and floors of one of the building's large courtyards. This screening will enable viewers to contemplate the work from a new perspective, combining the normal projection rate with a series of frozen images, thus helping the audience fully appreciate the pictorial nature of the film.

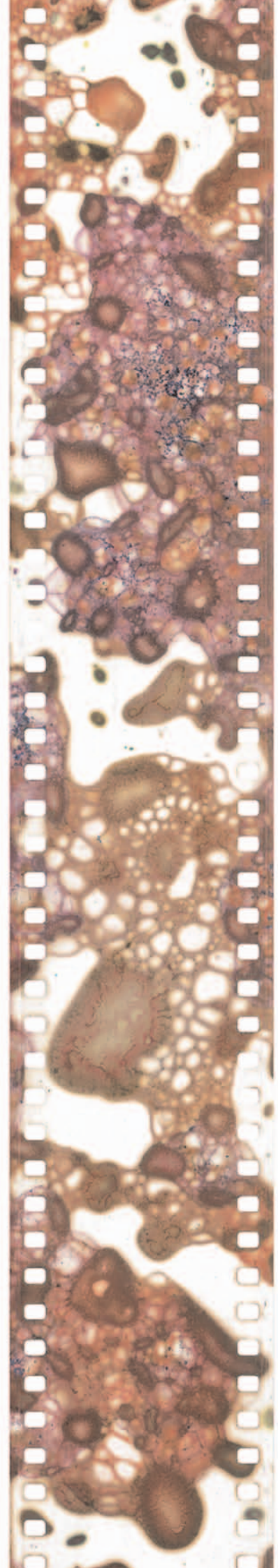
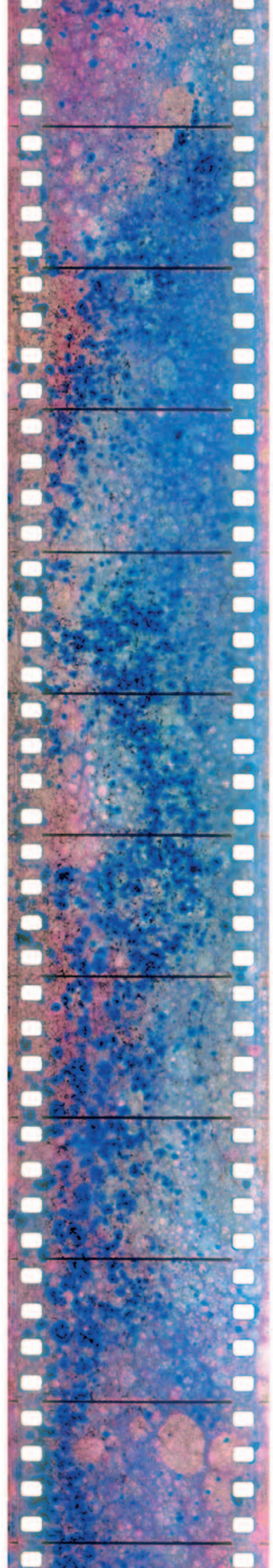
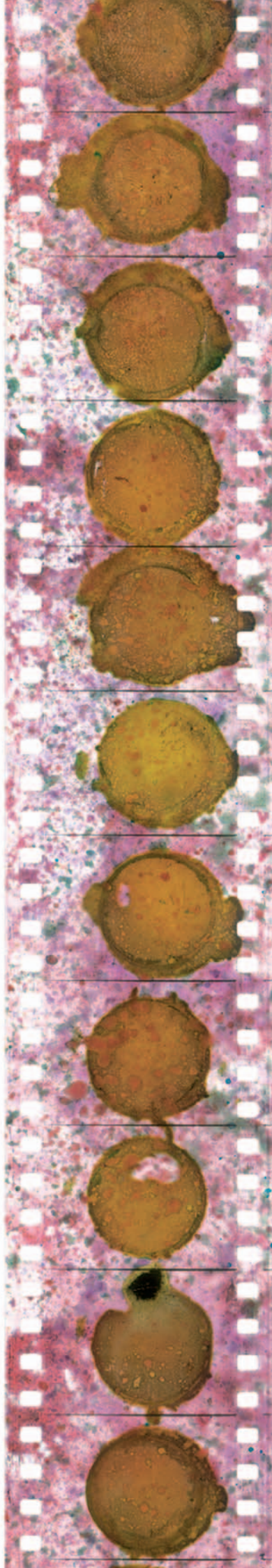
There will also be an exhibition of reproductions of the frames painted by Sistiaga, as well as two documentaries about the artist and his creative process. One of the documentaries was made in 1981 by Gorka Sistiaga Beklemicheff, the artist's son, and focuses on Sistiaga the painter. The other documentary is a co production by the French channel Arte and Lobster Films, and focuses on Sistiaga's creative process when making his painted films.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the exhibition, Tabacalera has also published the first catalogue ever dedicated exclusively to *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*. The catalogue includes both texts published over the film's nearly forty-year-long trajectory by critics and film-makers, and those written especially for the occasion.

On its website, www.tabacalera.eu, Tabacalera has also created a special section dedicated to this exhibition, which offers a wide range of information about the exhibits, the film and the artist. It also features a video of an interview held with Sistiaga himself in Tabacalera, videos on how the exhibition was mounted, fragments of the film, texts and photos, among other points of interest.

To complement the exhibition in Tabacalera, *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...* will be screened at the Victoria Eugenia Theatre in Donostia - San Sebastián on 21 June. The screening will take place at 20:00 and will offer viewers the opportunity of seeing the film exactly as the artist conceived it.

Painted frames of ...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...



The film

...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...

José Antonio Sistiaga. 1968-70.
35mm, 75', colour, silent.

Experimental, abstract film painted directly onto the film strip. Film with no camera.
108,000 painted frames. Approximately 2.5 km of film strip.

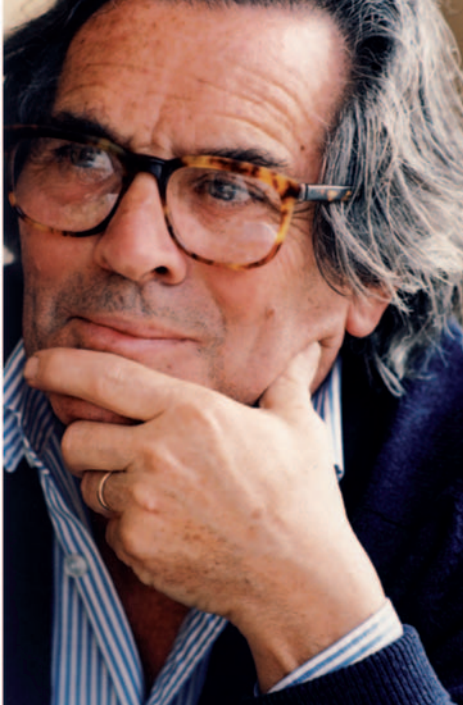
The film's strange title, *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*, has no meaning, it is made up merely of syllables that sound something like Basque. In order to ensure that the only lead character in the film was the painting itself, J.A. Sistiaga did not even want to give the work a title, but given the political situation of the time (the film was made when Franco's regime was still in power), censorship left him no choice. So, he rang his friend and fellow artist Rafael Ruiz Balerdi, and asked him to invent a title that would sound like something said in the Basque language but that had no meaning, since Basque was prohibited at the time. The name that Balerdi came up with on the spot became the definitive title of the film.

The initial idea to bring painting to film strip was conceived in 1958, when the artist saw a film by the experimental film-maker Norman McLaren in Montparnasse and decided that one day, he too would make a painted film. Years later, in 1968, Ruiz Balerdi gave him a reel of 35mm film strip, the same kind as he was using to paint his film *Homenaje a Tarzán (Tribute to Tarzan)*, and the artist began to paint his own project, frame by frame.

...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren... decisively renewed the tradition of painting on film. Through his abstract, silent feature-length film, Sistiaga aims to offer an alternative to traditional cinematographic representation. At first, the project had a certain narrative nature, but after a few months, the artist decided to eliminate all representative elements and the material of his painting became the film's only theme. Nevertheless, he maintained the first (more narrative) part, entitled *De la luna a Euskadi (From the moon to the Basque Country)* for which he won the Experimental Film Award at the Bilbao Film Festival in 1968. The second version of this first short film eventually became *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*

The participation of the Navarran businessman and sponsor Juan Huarte was a decisive factor in the creative process of the film. Thanks to the funding provided by the production company X-Films, set up by Huarte himself to finance avant-garde film projects, Sistiaga was able to work on his film for 17 intense months. During that time he worked 12 to 15-hour days crouching down on the floor to paint his film strips.

In some sections, the film was painted straight along the film strip, disregarding its division into frames, while in others the outline provided by the frames was kept with interdependent spatial areas being separated off. What is more, Sistiaga's action painting is accomplished through the action of different natural elements alongside conventional inks and colours: sun, to which the film strip was exposed to dry the paint applied to it, moisture and sand, which was used to scratch the film strip, etc. Always letting intuition be the guiding force and leaving ample room for the intervention of chance.



1996. J. A. Sistiaga (Photo Gillenca)

Artist

José Antonio Sistiaga (Donostia-San Sebastián, 1932)

After commencing his artistic training by making copies of classic works hanging at the San Telmo Museum in San Sebastián, J. A. Sistiaga moved to Paris, where he lived from 1954 to 1961, coming into close contact with the avant-garde artistic movements of the era. During that time, informalism was at its height, and the movement had an enormous impact on Sistiaga. Both painter and film-maker, Sistiaga is closely associated with the style of action painting or gestural art.

Between 1963 and 1968, he organised free painting workshops for children in Donostia-San Sebastián and Elorrio, applying the Freinet method.

In 1965 he became, alongside Amable Arias and Jorge Oteiza, one of the driving forces behind the group of avant-garde artists called GAUR, which also encompassed Eduardo Chillida, Nestor Basterrechea, Jose Luis Zumeta, Remigio Mendiburu and Rafael Ruiz Balerdi, and was created with the aim of promoting the Basque School.

In 1968 he made his first film painted directly onto celluloid. The film was entitled *De la luna a Euskadi* (*From the moon to the Basque Country*) and would later constitute the first version of the experimental feature film...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...

After this experience, Sistiaga resumed his painting and in 1988-89, made a new experimental film called *Impresiones en la alta atmósfera* (*Impressions from the Upper Atmosphere*).

Both his paintings and his films have been featured in numerous exhibitions and experimental film cycles all over the world (London, New York, Paris, Brussels, Venice, etc.).

J. A. Sistiaga currently lives in Ziburu (Lapurdi, French Basque Country) and continues working in his workshop in Donostia - San Sebastián.

Films

- 1968 - *De la luna a Euskadi*. 35 mm, 8', colour, silent (1st version)
1968-70 - *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...* 35mm, 75', colour, silent (2nd version).
1970 - *Ana* 16mm, 7', black and white, sound.
Laztanak. 16mm, 85'
1972 - *Encuentros 1972, Pamplona*. 16mm, 45', black and white, colour, silent.
1988-89 - *Impresiones en la alta atmósfera*. 70mm/15 perforations, 7', colour, sound.
1991 - *Paisaje inquietante Nocturno*. 35mm., 14', colour, sound.
En un jardín imaginado, 35mm., 14', sound.
1992 - *Han (sobre el sol)*, currently being made, 70mm/15 perforations, 7', colour, sound.

Exhibition organiser

Álvaro Matxinbarrena

Alvaro Matxinbarrena (Donostia – San Sebastián, 1958) is both an artist and an exhibition organiser. Since the year 2002, he has worked as an exhibition organiser in centres such as the Koldo Mitxelena Kulturunea in Donostia - San Sebastián, La Casa Encendida in Madrid, La Casa Asia in Barcelona, the Patio Herreriano Museum in Valladolid and the Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelone, with artists such as Iván Zulueta, Marta Cárdenas, José Llanos, Judas Arrieta, José Antonio Sistiaga and Jon Zabaleta, among others.

As an artist, he has worked in the field of painting, sculpture and installations since the 1980s, making occasional forays into the work of performance art and film.

His work forms part of collections owned by La Caixa (Testimony collection), the Gipuzkoa Provincial Government, the Madrid City Council and the Artium Museum in Vitoria , among others

Catalogue

Alongside the exhibition, Tabacalera also presents the first ever publication dedicated exclusively to the film *...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...* The catalogue includes both texts from the film's long trajectory and those written especially for the occasion. In addition to texts by the Director-General of Tabacalera, Joxean Muñoz, and the exhibition organiser, Alvaro Matxinbarrena, the catalogue also features the contributions of renowned critics and film-makers:

Joxean Muñoz (Director-General of Tabacalera): *(...) The title means nothing. So do not expect to understand anything. Just let yourself drift. A film is a journey. A road. The film is silent. There are no words. There is no music. But you will feel it has spoken to you. The title sounds like a charm. Let yourself be bewitched.*

Alvaro Matxinbarrena (Exhibition organiser): *(...) Sistiaga is, without doubt, a unique artist. A straight-talking, fearless, sincere artist with no prejudices, who makes no concessions ... as he once again demonstrates on this occasion.*

José J. Baquedano: *(...) ...ere erera... is a silent film because we are sick of words containing advice, messages and discourses. It is an attack against dead, sleeping, sitting, bored, imprisoned and silenced spectators. It is not for those who look without participating and participate without looking.*

Begoña Vicario: *(...) by far the best way of seeing the film is to be completely unaware of any external information about it, to arrive in a virgin state to this first screening, in which everything that happens and everything that passes through our minds is natural and biological.*

Boris Lehman: *(...) A masterpiece of spontaneous cinema, certainly the work of a child, the film draws us into a unique adventure of total perception.*

Jean Michel Bouhours: *(...) The viewer is dragged along by a beam of light, has the feeling of moving towards the light, of passing through corpuscular universes created by drops of coloured ink placed on the transparent film strip.*

Juan Bufill: *(...) The result is a vibrant, changing, chromatic magma, as pictorial as Pollock's abstract expressionism, but much more suggestive and evocative. One thinks one is seeing a cracked ocean, a surging archipelago, some animal waters, an astral space within the body. It is a psychedelic work in the best and original sense of the word, a mental, sensory opening up, which, unlike an LSD trip, does not damage the brain, but could even be beneficial...*

Tabacalera
Donostia

...ere erera baleibu
izik subua aruaren...



1969. J. A. Sistiaga painting ...ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...

Tabacalera

During the 20th century, Tabacalera was a tobacco factory. After its closure, the Basque institutions (the San Sebastián City Council, the Gipuzkoa Provincial Government and the Basque Government) decided to turn the building into a cultural centre for the 21st century.

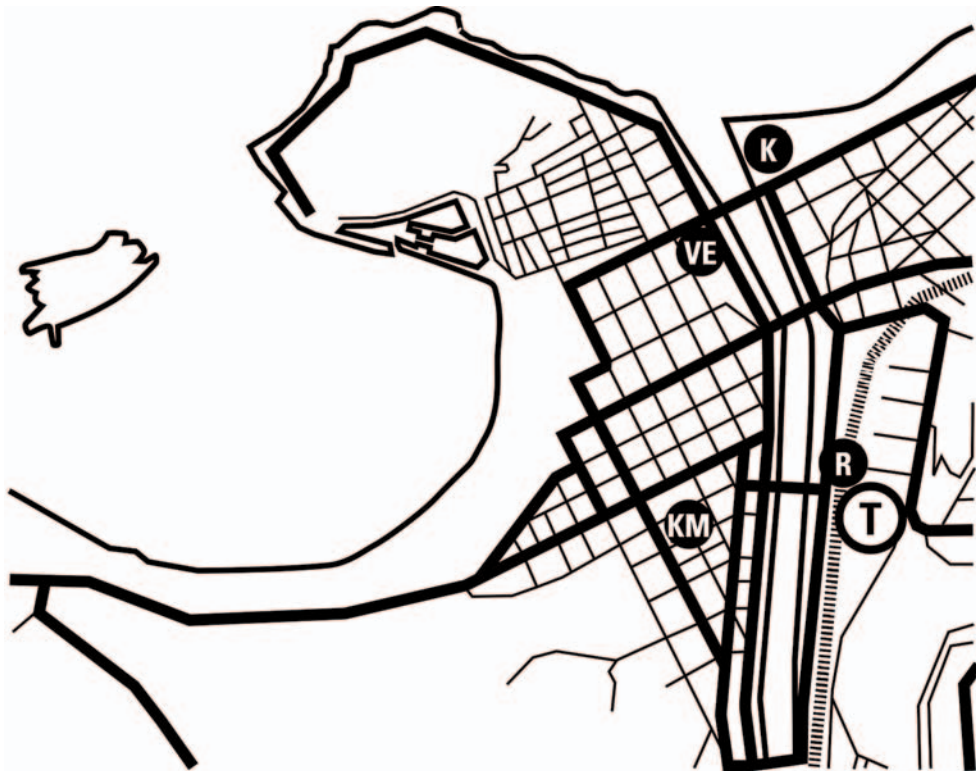
Tabacalera will be a centre for production. A centre for display which will organise exhibitions, projections and performances. It will be a centre for reflection, a debate forum and a place to exchange ideas. It will be a specialist training and open training centre, focusing on life-long learning. And it will also be a place for archiving and dissemination. Tabacalera aims to be a useful tool in the transformation of our cultural arena into the digital age.

With this objective, the centre reaffirms its interest in visual culture and in setting up channels of dialogue between creators and the general public, from the factory-like nature of its halls. Thus, Tabacalera sees its future as a factory of visual culture.

Forthcoming exhibition

Summer - Julian Schnabel

27 July – 7 October



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