

**TOPIC** is the latest and perhaps most ambitious project of the CIT, the TOPIC-International Puppet Centre of Tolosa, whose "seed was planted" 34 years ago and which was inaugurated in November 2009, a 3.600m<sup>2</sup> Centre dedicated to the dissemination, conservation of heritage, research, training and education, around the world of the puppet. A unique Centre that in its fifteen years of life has established itself as an international reference. It has been an arduous and difficult task in which Miguel Arreche (who died in 2013) and Idoya Otegui, with the tireless collaboration of Enkarni Génua and Manolo Gómez, worked tirelessly, there were moments of discouragement, but finally since November 27, 2009, TOPIC, the International Puppet Centre of Tolosa is now a reality.

The Centre is located at number 1 Euskal Herria Square (commonly called Plaza de Justicia) in Tolosa. Before housing puppets, the old building that houses TOPIC was the prison and courthouse of Tolosa, and later, it has had many other uses; among them, that of a euskaltegi (school of Basque language). Of the old building, only the porticoed façade remains, a cultural asset, the building, which leads to it, is completely new. This building is municipal property, but the City Council of Tolosa has ceded it to the CIT for 20 years by agreement, renewed for other 20 years.

TOPIC is a special, attractive and interesting Centre, which puts the emphasis on imagination, innovation and originality. It is a unique project: a Comprehensive Puppet Centre, unique in Europe, which includes:

- A 250-seat theatre
- A multipurpose hall with capacity for 50 spectators, creative space for productions, co-productions of puppet shows and creative residencies
- A Museum - 400 m<sup>2</sup>
- A temporary exhibition hall 200 m<sup>2</sup>
- A Documentation Centre dedicated to puppetry in which all its material is digitalised and a good part of it is accessible via the Internet as long as it does not conflict with copyright
- Workshops for teaching puppetry to children, teachers and professionals in the world of puppetry
- Online teaching workshop
- Residency for artists, researchers or teachers.

A project open to all puppeteers, researchers or puppet lovers who wish to delve a little deeper into this fascinating art as old as humankind itself.

Upon entering TOPIC, the visitor not only enters a world of living objects, poetry, stories, fiction, etc., but also a material world, an artistic world, a place for play, humour, emotions and theatre; in short, a universe of imagination.

TOPIC began its history more than twenty years ago. It was in 1982 when the Centre for Initiatives of Tolosa started a new cultural activity and promoted the creation of an International Puppet Festival, Titirijai. At first, it seemed like an original idea, and even a risky proposal in the opinion of many. But, finally, it began to take shape and became a successful idea. At the beginning and until twenty years ago, the CIT was made up exclusively of volunteers whose effort brought with it the consolidation of this festival and many other highly relevant activities such as the European Choral Competition of Tolosa.

When the Titirijai festival finally took hold (it celebrated its 40th edition in 2022), the Tolosa Centre for Initiatives approached another project: why not take advantage of the knowledge and skills acquired to promote something new? Therefore, it could be said that TOPIC did not emerge from nowhere. Quite the contrary, it could be seen as a logical consequence of Titirijai. A few years before this project materialised, that initial group of volunteers became more professional and the CIT began to have a staff of professional workers.

As a museum, research, teaching and creation complex, TOPIC offers itself as a meeting point for puppeteers from all over the world. A place to learn, perform, research, produce and share experiences, information, reflections and to work in a comfortable, functional and very well-equipped environment with state-of-the-art infrastructure. All of this is available to those who share their passion for the knowledge, promotion and improvement of the art of puppetry, although it is also a place open to interaction with other artistic disciplines. In fact, TOPIC is an active member of UNIMA, the International Union of the Puppet, the oldest theatre association in Europe (founded in 1929), of ICOM (International Council of Museums), has been part of the Board of Directors of ICOM Spain, of EMYA, of SIBMAS (Société Internationale des Bibliothèques et des Musées des Arts du Spectacle), etc.

In its fifteen years of existence, TOPIC has a documentary collection of more than 3.160 DVDs of shows, more than 8.000 photographic records, around 27.000 documents from 4.000 companies from all over the world, more than 6.000 posters and 1.400 books. As we mentioned at the beginning, these funds, with the exception of books, are completely digitalised, making us a pioneering centre in Europe (there are only two others that are in the process of digitalisation: FIDENA in Bochum, Germany, and the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville Mézières).

Since its opening, the Museum, which has a collection of over 3,000 pieces, has been visited by nearly 200,000 people; 34 exhibitions have been held, 27 of its own production and 7 of external exhibitions.

- *Marionetas de Mali* (2009)
- *Muñecos animados* (2010)
- *China, personajes de la tradición* (2010)
- *Indonesia - Wayang Golek* (2010)
- *Colorín* (2011)
- *Titiriteros de Binéfar* (2011)
- *Arketal* (2011)
- *Gelede Masks* (2012)
- *Pinocho* (2012)
- *Arte de Mariona Masgrau* (2012)
- *Txotxongillo Taldea, Manolo y Enkarni* (2013)
- *Rutas de Polichinela* (2013)
- *Marionetas del agua de Vietnam* (2014)
- *Akhyan: Máscaras, scrolls y marionetas indias* (2014)
- *Todos los Hilos en las Manos* (2015)
- *El juego y los títeres – colección Casa de los Títeres de Abizanda* (2015)
- *La Nave de los locos – Joan Baixas* (2016)
- *Zahra Sabri, Una soñadora de Irán* (2016)
- *Barriga Verde de Feria en Feria* (2017)
- *Un viaje al universo de los ART-TOYS. Una Consecuencia contemporánea de los Títeres* (2017)
- *30 años de Buho & Maravillas* (2018)

- *Títeres animados (Stop Motion) (2018)*
- *Escenas e Historias – SpeelTheatre Holland (2019)*
- *Giù la Maschera (2019)*
- *El teatro de Marionetas de Formosa (2020)*
- *Mujeres, Hombres y marionetas. UNIMA Creer y Crear un Futuro Común - 1929-2019 (2021)*
- *Teatro de Papel (2021)*
- *Retablo de Figurillas (2022)*
- *Jordi Bertran (2022)*
- *La Tartana, 45 años en el Arte del Títere (2023)*
- *John M. Blundall Maestro Titiritero (2023)*
- *La Máquina Real, Evolución del teatro de figuras Siglo XI-Siglo XX (2024)*

In addition to preserving heritage, TOPIC does important work to promote the art of puppetry:

- By scheduling regular puppet shows
- By offering training workshops:
  - For children, introducing them to the world of puppetry.
  - For teachers, teaching them how to use puppets in schools as a pedagogical and therapeutic tool.
  - For puppeteers or professionals from other related artistic disciplines as professional retraining.
- By organizing guided visits to the museum.
- By organizing seminars, colloquiums, professional days on the art of puppetry.
- By publishing exhibition catalogues and publications related to the art of puppetry.

In its 15 years of existence, TOPIC has become a national and international reference, having won important awards:

- Special Mention at the Basque Government Tourism Awards (2011)
- Silletto Award granted by the European Museum Forum (2012)
- Ibero-American Award for Education and Museums (2013)
- Cascabel de Oro from ONCE (2013)
- TOPIC becomes part of the “Excellence Club” of Museums of the organization The Best in Heritage (2013)
- Rosa M<sup>a</sup> García Cano Award (2014)
- Pelegrín de Plata Award granted by the Arbolé Theater in Zaragoza (2015)
- Galicreques Award (2016)
- Puppet Park Award from the Zaragoza City Council for its career (2018)
- 8th Ibermuseos Award, honorable mention (2018)