

Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Call for Artists

Exhibition Visual Identity

Euskaldunik Hemen Bada?
"Are There Any Basques Here?"

*We are looking for a creative visionary to give a
landmark exhibition its face and its soul.*

The Story

It is sometime in the early twentieth century. A ship is steaming into New York Harbor. Among the passengers are Basques — people from a small, ancient nation straddling Spain and France, speaking Euskara, a language unlike any other on earth, with no known relatives anywhere in the world.

As they make their way off Ellis Island and onto the ferry to Manhattan, one of them hears something unexpected: someone cupping their hands, calling out across the dock:

"Euskaldunik hemen bada?"
"Are there any Basques here?"

That was Valentín Aguirre — a Basque hotel owner who sent his employees to search for newly arrived Basque emigrants. They welcomed the newcomers to the U.S. with open arms, helping prep them for success in an unfamiliar land. For those travelers, hearing their mother tongue after weeks at sea must have been an enormous relief.

That moment — the call, the recognition, the welcome — is the heart of this exhibition. *Euskaldunik Hemen Bada?* is a temporary exhibition about the vibrant Basque community in the United States today, telling a story of more than 500 years of Basque presence in the Americas. It will debut at Ellis Island itself — the very place where those voices first rang out.

What the Exhibition Is

Eight interconnected sections take visitors on a journey through Basque America:

- A welcome from Valentín Aguirre himself, and an overview of Basques in the United States.
- The Basque Country today and how it came to be, introduced by Lehendakari Jose Antonio Aguirre, the first president of the Provisional Government of the Basque County.
- Aspen tree carvings from the American West — names and poems left in bark by Basque shepherds a century ago — telling the story of emigrants' perseverance and hard work.
- Oral histories: voices of Basque speakers and other Basque-Americans across generations, connected by Euskara, the Basque language.
- A central plaza with four pairs of reenactment figures, each spanning history and today: a whale hunter who becomes a judge; a missionary who becomes a novelist; a jai alai player who becomes Jon Rahm; a boardinghouse owner who becomes a nurse. Each pair connects the story of a Basque immigrant to a present-day member of the diaspora community, connecting the past with the present.
- Historical artifacts denoting Basque presence in North America: a centuries-old mass book, letters written in Euskara, and the first newspapers printed in Euskara from the time of the Gold Rush.
- An interactive station where visitors discover whether they “qualify” as Basque: learning about Basque surnames, trying to pronounce the language, and diving into immigration patterns with an interactive map.
- A closing screen set in the Basque Block in Boise, where visitors can pick and choose between short documentaries to learn more about Basque history and culture.

What We Need From You

We are inviting artists and designers — graphic designers, illustrators, fine artists, or hybrids — to propose a visual identity for this exhibition.

This is not a cookie-cutter brand project. The exhibition is layered: intimate and epic, archival and interactive, deeply serious and genuinely joyful. **We want our visitors to leave the exhibit with knowledge on the long history of the Basques in the U.S., understanding of the vibrant community that exists today, and Euskara's role at the heart of Basque identity, bridging the gaps between Basques past, present, and future.**

We need someone who will sit with the story, find its visual truth, and build an identity that can hold all of it.

Deliverables

The selected artist will provide the following by the end of the project. We have kept the scope focused so that the work is achievable within the project timeline and budget.

- ☐ Title identity — a wordmark or logo for the exhibition
- ☐ A Visual system — this includes a color palette, typography and hierarchy, and supporting visual language such as patterns, textures, framing devices, illustration style, or photographic treatment
- ☐ Simple style guide documenting the visual system and showing samples of how it works in practice
- ☐ Two representative mockups showing how the identity could be applied in the exhibition — such as a title wall and an interpretive panel. These are examples of the identity in action, not final production designs with complete exhibition content
- ☐ Editable source files and production-ready assets, as appropriate (AI, EPS, SVG, PDF, PNG, and JPG formats)

A Few Visual Threads to Pull

- The lauburu — the Basque cross, carried from Euskal Herria to every corner of the world
- Aspen bark: the texture of a name carved by hand, far from home
- Ellis Island's physical presence: worn stone, iron, light through tall windows
- The Basque landscape: deep green mountains, gray limestone, the Bay of Biscay
- Archival material: ship manifests, handwritten letters, Basque-language newspapers printed in San Francisco
- The energy of plazas in the Basque Country and the Basque Block in Boise: people dancing, gathering, and celebrating together
- Aguirre's question itself — searching, hopeful, reaching toward something familiar in a strange place

You Don't Have to Be Basque

Seriously. What we're looking for is curiosity, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to translate a rich human story into compelling visual language. We'll share resources, connect you with community members and historians, and make sure you feel like a genuine collaborator from day one.

That said, if you have a connection to Basque culture, the diaspora, immigration history, or Ellis Island specifically — we'd especially love to hear from you.

Project Timeline

Anticipated Schedule

Last Day of Submissions: October 23, 2026

Artist Selected: October 30, 2026

Project kickoff: November 2, 2026

Final identity delivered: December 31, 2026 (adjustments to timeline possible as necessary)

How to Apply

We're keeping this simple. Send us:

1. A short note — half a page is fine — about who you are, why this project speaks to you, and how you'd approach it.
2. 3 to 5 portfolio samples. Exhibition work, cultural branding, illustration — show us what you make.
3. A sample of the deliverables listed above. A possible logo or wordmark, color scheme, and typography. By no means does this need to be the final product, just an idea of the path you would like to take.
4. Your proposed fee for this project, with a note that the fee should include up to two rounds of consolidated revisions.

Submit to

Subject line: "Euskaldunik Hemen Bada — Artist Submission"

Email: amayah@basquemuseum.eus

Deadline: October 23, 2026

Compensation and Terms

We invite applicants to propose a fee or range for this project based on the scope described above. We are committed to fair compensation for creative work and look forward to finding an approach that works for both parties.

Revision rounds

The proposed fee should include up to two rounds of consolidated revisions or edits after the initial concept presentation.

Third-party expenses

Any third-party costs — such as font licenses, stock photography, illustration assets, or other purchased materials — must be included in the proposed budget.

Ownership

All final work commissioned as part of this project will be owned by the Basque Museum & Cultural Center. The selected artist is welcome to include the completed work in their portfolio after the exhibition has been publicly announced or launched.

About the Exhibition Partners

The Basque Country and the Basque Autonomous Government

Euskal Herria — the Basque Country — is an ancient nation straddling the western Pyrenees on the border of present-day Spain and France. Home to one of Europe's oldest cultures and a language, Euskara, with no known relatives anywhere in the world, the Basque Country has shaped the lives of millions and sent its people to every corner of the globe.

The Basque Autonomous Government works to preserve and share that heritage at home and abroad. Its General Secretariat of Foreign Action and Global Euskadi leads the government's international engagement, strengthening ties between the Basque homeland and the Basque communities that have taken root around the world — including the vibrant diaspora whose story this exhibition tells.

The Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Located in Boise, Idaho — home to the largest Basque community outside of the Basque Country — the Basque Museum & Cultural Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing Basque cultural heritage in the Americas. For generations, this community has gathered in Boise to celebrate, cook, dance, play mus, sing, and keep a language and culture alive across thousands of miles and many decades.

The museum operates Boiseko Ikastola, a full Euskara-immersion preschool, and produces community programming, cultural events, and exhibitions reaching audiences locally and internationally. *Euskaldunik Hemen Bada?* is the next chapter in that story.

Jon Bilbao Library at The University of Nevada, Reno

The Jon Bilbao Basque Library at the University of Nevada, Reno (Renoko Euskal Liburutegia) aims to be a research library for all researchers interested in Basque culture and the Basque Diaspora, as well as serve as a memory institution for the Basque Community throughout North America. Founded in the late 1960s, it is the leading library located outside of the Basque Country on Basque subjects. Today, the Basque Library is integrated into the University of Nevada, Reno's Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, and combines the advantages of modern-day technology and strong relationships with the Basque Country's libraries and key organizations to provide the best services possible. The resources, collection, and connections the Library brings to *Euskaldunik Hemen Bada?* will help create a dynamic, interactive, and memorable exhibition.

Eskerrik asko. Thank you.
