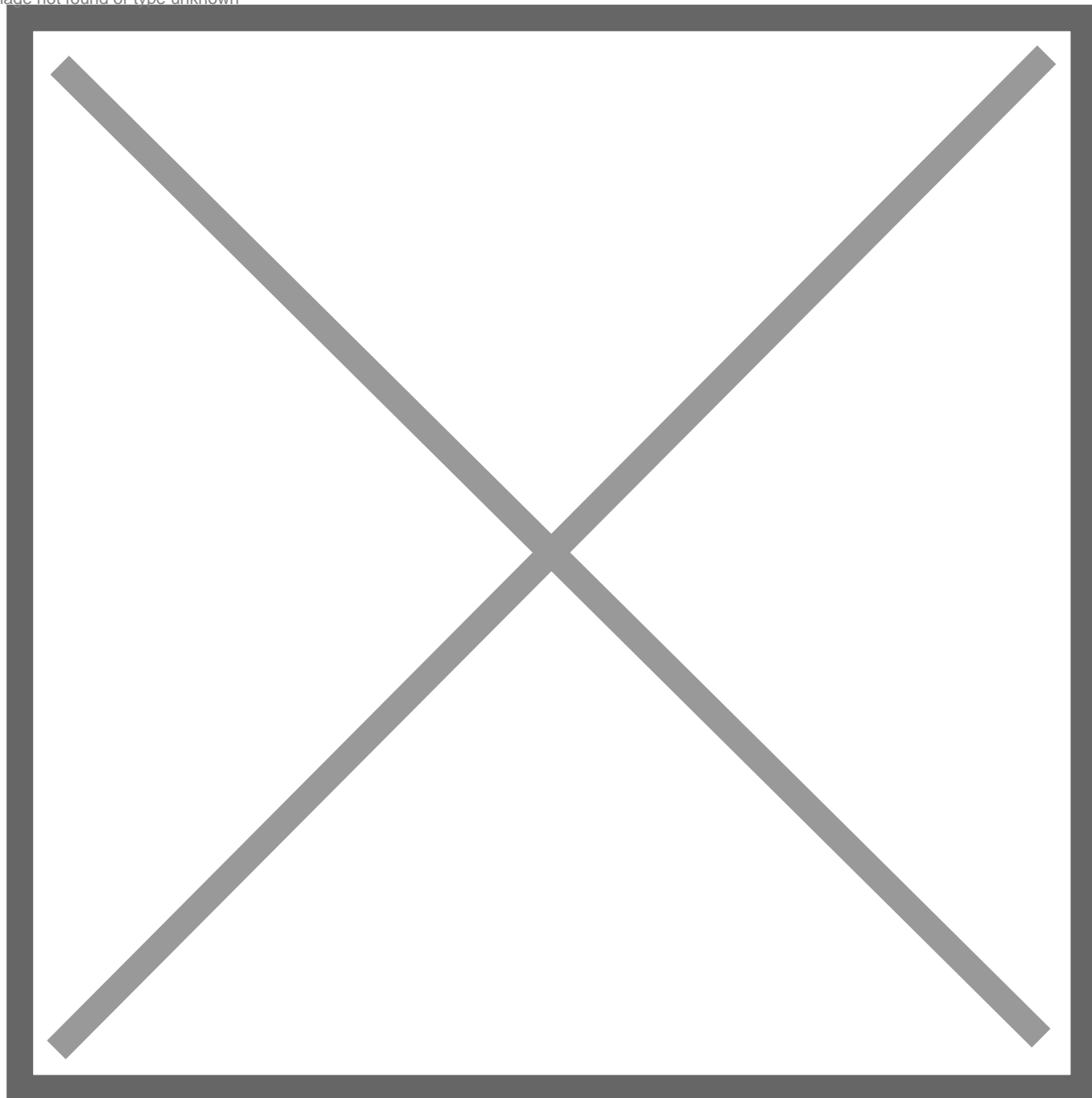


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Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu [Sanctuary of Our Lady of Arantzazu]

Spain

Barrio Aránzazu, 7
Guipúzcoa 20567 Oñati

Commission

1950

Completion

1955

Original name

Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu
[Sanctuary of Our Lady of Arantzazu]

Original use

Religious/centre of worship

Current use

Religious/centre of worship

Architects

Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oíza, Luís Laorga

Artists

Jorge Oteiza, Eduardo Chillida (sculptors), Lucio Muñoz, Carlos Pascual de Lara, Néstor Basterrechea, Javier de Eulate (painters)

Construction method

Cast-in-place concrete, in-situ concrete

Concrete by reinforcement

Reinforced concrete

Architectural concrete

Architectural concrete

Structural types

One-dimensional/diaphragmatic arches, Two-dimensional/ [shear] wall

Description

On a remote mountain in Guipuzkoa, surrounded by a spectacular natural landscape, stands the Franciscan sanctuary that has sheltered the image of the Virgin of Arantzazu for 500 years. The current basilica was designed by Francisco Javier Sainz de Oíza, who won the competition that was held after a fire destroyed the previous church; the new basilica was built on the foundations of the old.

Located on the edge of a cliff, surrounded by majestic mountains, the powerful appearance of the new temple also makes reference to geological elements: stone, concrete and wood are, in the words of the architect, “materials that make no concessions” for a building with an ancestral appearance “that welcomes the faithful like an inverted ship, where sound is reflected and the word is heard”. The descending stairway that provides access to the basilica, with its characteristic façade of roughly hewn granite points and decorated with sculptures of the apostles by Oteiza, emphasizes the tectonic aspect of the building. Inside, the vaulted wooden ceiling recalls the

inverted keel of a ship, and the concrete bas-relief by Chillida that decorates the apse, bathed in a dramatic light from a low angle, refers to the mountainous cliffs that surround the sanctuary. A free-standing bell tower, also decorated with granite points, completes the ensemble.

A whole generation of artists, unknown in the 1950s, participated in one way or another in the reconstruction of the basilica. Despite the disapproval their work initially elicited from the conservative society of Guipuzkoa, the international prestige that many of those artists have garnered fully justifies their selection. Today the building is well-loved, and it is considered one of the groups of artwork that best reflects the Basque character.

Links

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