

# •Basque Dwellings in Art Metal•

## Maite Iribarren-Gorrindo

Material information and concepts on theme

"CELEBRATING AND CULTIVATING AWARENESS OF THE BASQUES AND THE BASQUE CULTURE."



•Sheep Wagons•  
Etxeak on Wheels  
Copper, brass, sterling silver



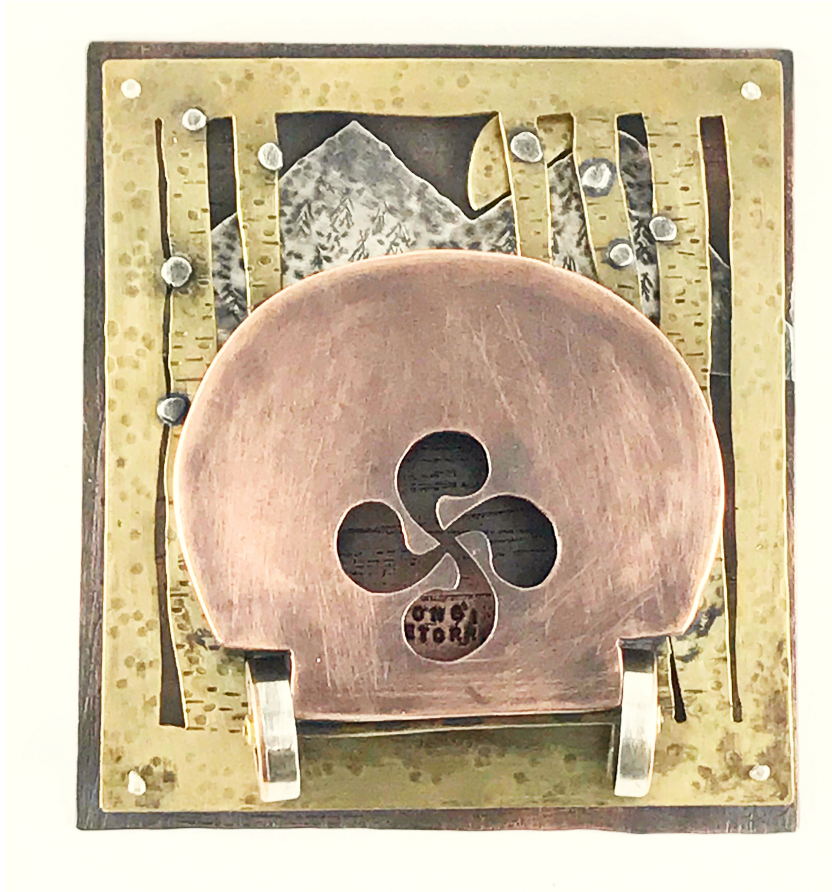
•Baserri•  
The Lost Key  
Copper, brass, resin, wood veneer, antique keys

\*in process, detail image

The theme of the Basque house has become a natural love within my art metals practice. First generation children surely feel the pulled heartstrings of their fathers the most. Countless stories, photos and visits back to the old country together while recounting "how things were" have grown into the fabric of our bond. Perhaps I'm compelled to guarantee that their stories live on in my work...a method to share their sacrifices made, so that we could all have a better life.



## •Sheep Wagons• Etxeak on Wheels



For decades, young men left their homes (etxeak) in the beautiful, yet poor, Basque Country to follow the dream of a new life in America. Many of them, like my father, didn't speak English nor knew much about sheep. However times were tough and others had already paved the way, so uncles sponsored nephews and former neighbors helped bring eager young men out West to become shepherders.

These were the loneliest of times for these young Basques. Most herded with a dog and perhaps a mule or a horse if they were lucky. Some had musical instruments and in the later years, they may have been lucky enough to have a radio to pass the evenings. However in the stillness of the night, just outside the sheep wagon, the land and the bedding down of the sheep combined - sang its own comforting song to the lonely shepherd. Then quietly, each evening, the shepherd crawled into his makeshift etxea on wheels and dream of days back home in the Basque Country.

Stories from our fathers (aita), grandfathers (aitxitxe, atoutxi) and other older Basque friends in our community are so vivid and passionate. Most of them reflect fondly on the beauty they found in their solace. As a child, my aita would take me through the aspen filled mountains where we would fish for brook trout together. He would whittle me a walking stick in silence...then quietly point out the comfort of nature's song all around us.



# •Baserri•

## The Lost Key



On the outskirts of many small towns (at sometimes entire towns themselves) one can often find a few farmhouses in mid-collapse. Large timber beams, once the strong center of a baserri, now leaning and fragile. Stone hearths, long cold, where centuries of families cooked countless meals over open flames. Doorways with the house name engraved in the stone pediments, crumbling in front of your eyes. Even Mother Nature took pity on these beautiful places and wrapped them carefully in her lush ferns and ivy.

Our ancestors were typically known by the house they were from, rather than their family name. Life was synonymous with your baserri: it was your home, your land, your history, your pride and identity. Centuries ago, our Basque families worked the soil with laiak (laia is a two legged, soil-turning tool, unique to the Basques) and tamed the wild land into productive crops and farmland. Each house, having a key - uniquely to their baserri, keeping all their dreams, loved ones and hard earned rewards, safe.

In a modern age, generations moved to bigger cities for more sophisticated careers and lifestyles. A key, the symbolic and literal connection to centuries of ones family history...left behind, even with a rightful inheritance. Taxes too high, upkeep nearly impossible and villages roads too inconvenient for weekend getaways are a few reasons for these abandoned farmhouses. Left unattended, the temptation for the wild lush green to take back her settlement was too great. There is great, albeit heartbreaking, beauty in a fern covered, abandoned baserri...to which we hold the key.



# •Lauburu Challenge• Annual September Tradition



Each September (my birth-month), I have a little self challenge to make a “Lauburu-a-Day”. It is something that look forward to every year, and I believe my friends and followers enjoy it as well. I post it every morning and encourage other Basques to play long with the hashtag #lauburuchallenge



The Lauburu is one of the best known symbols of the Basque culture. It often represents the four natural elements, as well as the sun in motion; it is also believed that the sun had the power of protection. The Lauburu is worn as an amulet, adorns architectural elements, is weaved into ceremonial textiles and celebrated in the daily life of the Basque people. The 30-day ephemeral exercise helps me explore my love of my culture, beautiful fall treasures (mostly food) and has often been the springboard for new designs to come.