

Cristóbal Balenciaga  
Technique, Material and Form

Press file

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# Cristóbal Balenciaga

## Technique, Material and Form

2025.05.07

Following a temporary closure in February, the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum reopens its doors with renovated spaces and a new museum collection exhibition.

Featuring exhibits from the museum's own repository, it presents a new discourse across the museum's five main halls, showcasing in each different themes related to the couturier and his oeuvre.

This year's programme aims to shine a light on the figure of Cristóbal Balenciaga and foster public awareness and appreciation of fashion's heritage dimension by building a discourse that connects the legacy safeguarded by the museum, contemporary design and today's society with cross-cutting concepts such as sustainability and diversity.

CBM 2011.17  
Evening dress in ivory ziberline, 1967



# The exhibition

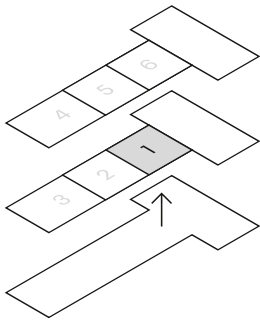
Under the title *Cristóbal Balenciaga: Technique, Material and Form*, the exhibition offers a new curated tour of the museum starting with a biographical display which showcases Balenciaga's professional, personal and creative journey and provides a geographical and historical context of the master from Getaria.

The following four halls present a fresh thematic discourse around the designer, exploring the 20th-century world of haute couture as well as the technique, material and form that were defining concepts in the work of Balenciaga. The exhibition thus provides a deeper, more educational approach to the couturier's work, influence and legacy

Curated by Igor Uria, the Museum's director of collections, the exhibition features over ninety pieces and includes technological equipment which allows the exhibits to be explored in 3D and the fabrics to be viewed in high resolution. This, together with additional audiovisual resources such as projection-mapped visuals, offers a deeper insight into the creative coherence and evolution of Balenciaga's silhouettes.

The exhibition also showcases the artistic interventions of set designer Ikerne Jiménez and designer and collagist Susana Blasco.

## Hall 1



## Cristóbal. Biography

Cristóbal Balenciaga's (1895-1972) biography starts and ends in Getaria, following a timeline that extends beyond his natural lifetime up to the inauguration of the museum.

A series of milestones mark the journey of a young boy from a small fishing village to his rise as the Master of Parisian Haute Couture who ruled the fashion world for almost three decades.

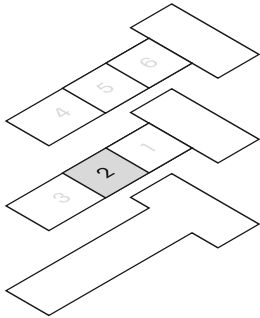
Regarded in his time as "invisible", "enigmatic", or "the man behind the curtain", Balenciaga always kept his personal life discreetly in the background.

By gathering in one place the few existing portraits, photos and scenes of his early life, work and personal possessions—including items of clothing, glimpses emerge of Cristóbal, the person hidden behind the fame of the Balenciaga name.



## Hall 2

## Balenciaga. The House



Cristóbal Balenciaga carved out his professional career as a fashion designer within the haute couture system, a highly competitive environment that reached its zenith in Paris during the decades of the mid-20th century which was characterized by the protected authorship of the designs, the supreme quality of the fabrics, the impeccable craftsmanship of the made-to-measure garments and the exclusiveness of the clientele.

Every season, the presentation of the collection in the salon at 10, Avenue George V, marked the turning point between the creative cycle and the commercial and production cycle at the House of Balenciaga.

Through a selection of creations from the 1958-1962 collections, the aim of this space is to immerse the visitor in the moment, place and society where Balenciaga dictated the pulse of fashion for over 30 years.

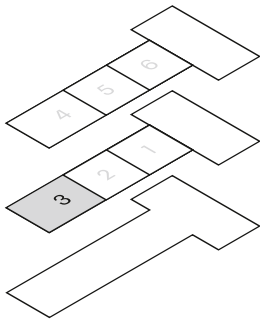
CBM 2000.125

Evening gown in fuchsia satin with ivory-coloured floral embroidery, 1958



## Hall 3

## Technique



Balenciaga was a master of technique. The first stage in his process was moulage, the moulding of fabric onto the body to define the shape.

The works selected in this exhibition room bear witness to this mastery, although not always in an obvious way. Enveloping swirls that wrap around the body, cut on the bias so as to lend the fabric fluidity, or garments designed with only one seam, embody the essence of structural minimalism and showcase his secrets.

However, although conceived by Balenciaga, these custom-made garments were expertly sewn in the ateliers by seamstresses. Every stitch that holds together the garments displayed in this museum was sewn by these invaluable collaborators, whose work this room seeks to honour.

Since 2014, the museum has conducted an area of research called *The Hands that Sew*. This Project collects testimonies and documentation of people who worked for Balenciaga and the know-how of the haute couture trade. The project collects, to date, more than 400 records and testimonies four hundred records and testimonies, as well as documentation of their experiences and and work experience, such as photographs, letters, work tools, objects, etc. The information is available in the exhibition and on the Museum's website.

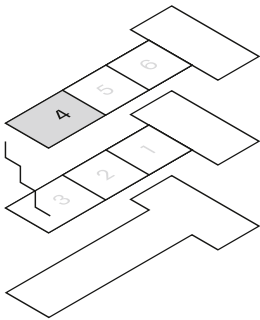
San Sebastian workshop





## Hall 4

## Material



Haute couture is a showcase for the high-quality fabrics produced by European textile manufacturers.

The close collaboration that existed between the textile suppliers and the fashion designers was undoubtedly instrumental in producing the vast range of sublime textures, colours, prints and embroidered fabrics the Parisian fashion houses used to captivate their clientele season after season.

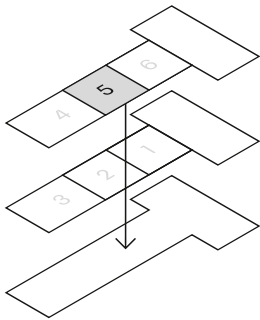
Balenciaga was recognised among his professional peers for his in-depth knowledge of fabrics. This exhibition hall is designed to reflect Balenciaga's ability to take the potential of different types of textiles to the limit.

CBM 2003.24ac  
Evening ensemble in black and white silk *broderie anglaise* gazar by Abraham, with pink silk bow, 1965  
Balenciaga. Paris



## Hall 5

## Shape



Cristóbal Balenciaga left an enduring mark on the history of fashion by introducing new silhouettes that redefined aesthetic ideals for women.

From his early collections—where the influences of designers such as Lanvin and Vionnet can be traced—to the structured, more architectural forms of later years, Balenciaga's trajectory was slow and deliberate. It was an evolution driven by thoughtful analysis and the desire to present new shapes and outlines which were constantly refined through a process of ongoing experimentation and adaptation.

The exhibits in this room have been selected to feature some of Balenciaga's milestone creations. Arranged in sequence to include earlier and later variations of the design, they highlight the progressive abstraction of the dress from the body and the importance of a third element: air.

CBM 06.1999

Baby-doll dress in silk ikat taffeta with floral print, 1958



© Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa / Manuel Outumuro

CBM 2006.85  
Evening coat in black silk taffeta, 1935



# Programme for 2025

Following the March reopening with the new exhibition from the collection, a sixth gallery will be inaugurated in spring to present the museum's collection of Balenciaga creations alongside works by other designers and from other collections with the aim of enhancing the visitor's experience and understanding of Balenciaga's work. On this occasion, the museum will be hosting exhibits from the Balenciaga Archives in Paris.

## Research, Creation and Technification

In October, the 2nd International Cristóbal Balenciaga Conference takes place in Getaria, bringing together some of the most renowned academics, researchers and scholars of historical and contemporary fashion, as well as professionals in fashion education and communication. Twenty-four proposals will be presented from over sixty submissions.

The research, creation, and technification programme will also continue, featuring the *Transmissions* course which boasts collaboration from sixteen of the world's most prestigious fashion schools, as well as the specialised training courses in haute couture sewing techniques which help disseminate Balenciaga's technical legacy. A selection of the resulting work will be put on display at the Aldamar Palace.

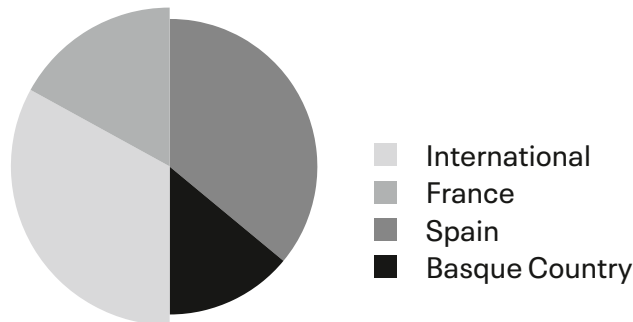
In addition, there will be an extensive array of cultural, leisure and wellness outreach activities designed to share the Balenciaga values of trustworthiness, loyalty, creativity, diversity and sustainability, and connect with the Museum community. Apart from fashion-related cultural activities, throughout the year, the museum will be offering a range of other programmes and activities aimed at schools, families and raising sustainable fashion and responsible consumption awareness, with a special focus on inclusive access.

# Data from 2024

In 2024, our museum received over 90,000 visitors — a figure that represents a 35% increase over the previous year, confirms the steady growth in the number of museum visits, and significantly outperformed pre-pandemic levels.

48% of the total number of visitors were from Spain, of which 13.5% were from the Basque Country and 34.5% were from the rest of the country. Madrid and Catalonia were the two regions that accounted for the highest number of visitors overall.

There was clear consolidation in the number of international visitors who represented 52% of the total. While the French constituted the largest single group of foreigners (17% of the total); the remainder came from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Netherlands.



# Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa

The Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum, inaugurated on 7 June 2011, is located in Getaria, the designer's hometown and the scene of his formative years and professional maturity, essential for understanding his contribution to the world of fashion.

In order to share Balenciaga's life and works, his relevance in the history of fashion and design and the contemporary nature of his legacy, the museum holds a unique collection. Its vast nature (over 5,100 pieces in a collection that only continues to grow, thanks to loans and donations) and its formal, chronological extension (including, for example, the designer's earliest models conserved) make it one of the most complete, coherent and interesting collections in existence today.

Another of the collections' exceptional values is the origin of the pieces. Balenciaga's great international clients were prominent social figures from the mid-20th century, such as Mona Von Bismarck, Bunny Mellon, Patricia López Wilshaw, Barbara Hutton, Princess Rethy, Grace Kelly and Madame Bricard, who wore some of the models held in the Archive.



## Información

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CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA MUSEOA

