

Amézaga Palace


Town:

Mallabia.

Location:

Azkaldea kalea, 1.

Access:

In the centre of Mallabia, close to the church of Andra Mari, although not immediately visible.

Other places of interest nearby:

Church of Andra Mari.
Mallabia.

Church of the Asunción (Assumption).
Mallabia.

Hermitage of San Pedro.
Mallabia.



One of Bizkaia's most interesting country palaces is to be found in the district of Santa María, leaving Mallabia on the road to Ermua.

Juan Bautista de Urizar y Amézaga, chaplain to the Royal and Supreme Council of Castile, secretary of honour to the Inquisition and administrator of the founding hospital in Madrid, ordered the palace to be built in the mid 18th century.

The palace's main interest lies in the way it unites two totally different building modes. The compact, rigidly discreet façade facing Mallabia belongs to the late phase of austere, plain Baroque, and is already verging on what would become the norm in a neo-classical world.

But it is the gallery open to the west that really strikes the exotic note, being a radical departure in the architecture of the region. In fact it has much more in common with the tastes of other areas, such as La Rioja or Castile; in this respect we should not lose sight of the promoter's close relationship with the Court in Madrid.

Building

Amézaga palace is a solid construction consisting of three storeys plus attic crowned with a hip roof.

Its originality lies in the two radically different views available to the spectator. Approached from Areitio, the building presents a façade of broad architraved galleries. Seen from the other side, however, from Mallabia, the building looks compact, hermetic, much more in line with the building practices prevailing in Bizkaia in the mid-18th century. Curiously, the other two façades are singularly uninteresting from the architectural point of view.

On the main façade, ashlar is reserved to underline the structural elements, such as the smooth impostes marking the floor levels, the window frames and the corner blocks; the rest of the façade consists of plastered rubble work.

Organised in a kind of five-span reticule, the layout of the palacio is quite original, as the greatest emphasis is laid on the first two spans, creating a slightly distorted, and distorting, perspective, as the central span seems to slide noticeably towards the spectator.

An off-centre round arch marks the main entrance to the house. Two large lintelled window-doors, giving onto balconies with wrought iron parapets, are set into the first floor. A spectacular Rococo escutcheon bearing the arms of the Urizar family fills the span between the two. Above, on the second floor, are two more lintelled and parapeted window-doors.

Less elaborate lintelled windows, framed by irregular ashlar work and noticeably smaller at attic level, are set into the rest of the façade. The only feature of interest on the ground floor is the round arch that once led to the stables. When the stables disappeared, the arch was blocked up and so it remains today.

Much lighter and breezier is the southern-facing façade. Basically, this is an architraved gallery of five vertical spans delimited by slender pillars linked horizontally with wrought iron parapets.

On the first and second floors, Tuscan capitals crown the pillars. The others are completely smooth. The kind of pear-shaped knots in the iron used in the balconies are typical of the 18th century. The differently sized spans, cut more or less irregularly in the façade, do not actually follow the rhythm of the gallery. On the attic floor, a wooden passage closes off the gallery.


Bizkaiko Foru Aldundia

Kultura Saila
Ondare Historikoko
Zerbitzua

Diputación Foral de Bizkaia

Departamento de Cultura
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