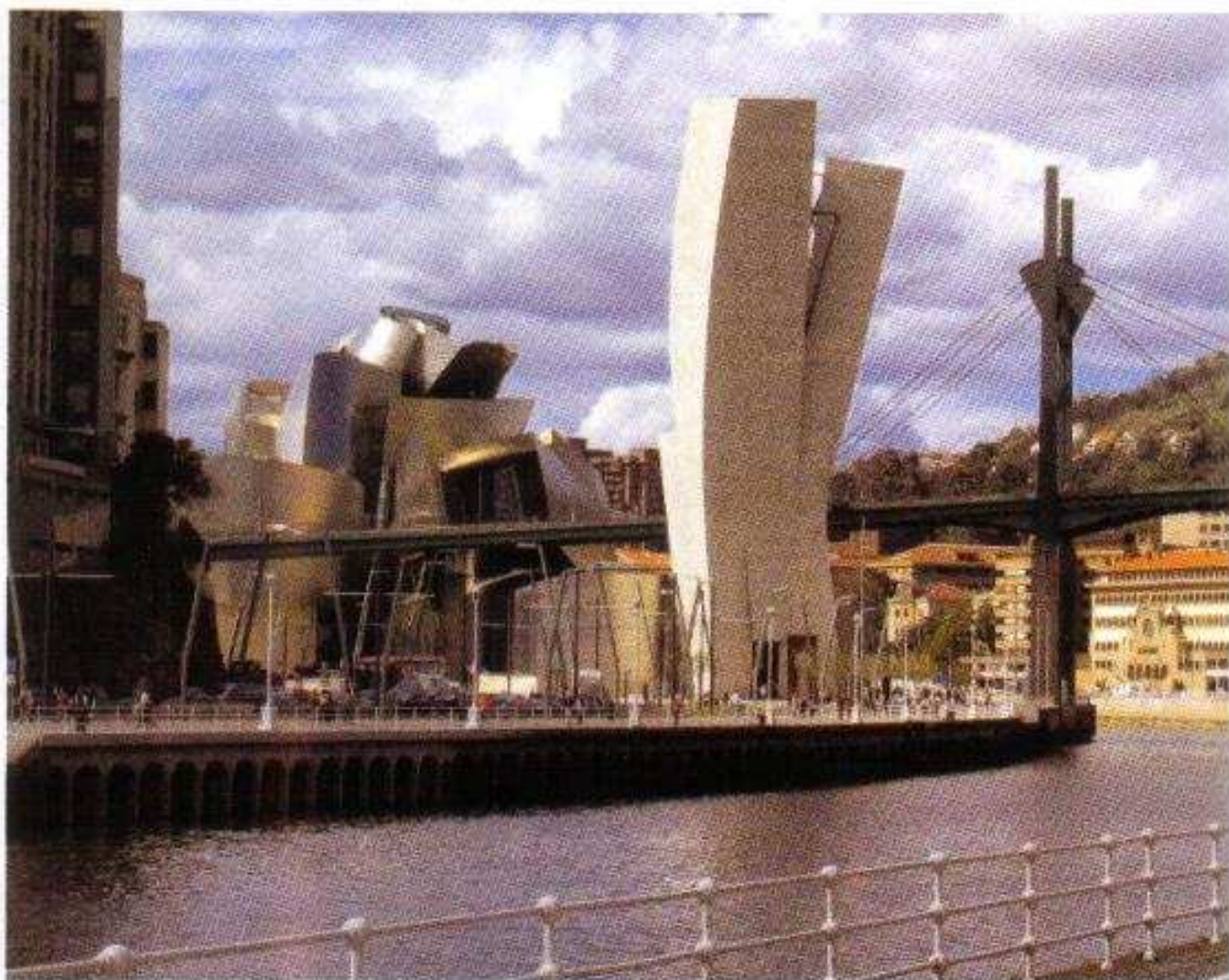


# The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

**The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, designed by Frank Gehry, opened in Bilbao, Spain in 1997. This institution, now an icon for Bilbao's progress, helped to spur a cultural renaissance and surge in tourism to the city**



Although the museum's impressive collection includes a broad spectrum of modern and contemporary art, it is the innovative building itself which is the city's stunning architectural jewel. Centred around an atrium that is 164 feet (50 meters) high are 19 galleries plus an auditorium, a

restaurant and offices. The museum's floor area is 260,000 square feet (24,000 square meters), nearly half of which is exhibition space. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao also includes the world's largest exhibition hall, some 422 feet (130 meters) long.

Architect Frank Gehry was faced

with some difficult design problems. On one side of the museum site in central Bilbao is the Nervion River; on this side the site is 52 feet (16 meters) below the level of the rest of the city. On another end is a bridge which serves as one of the city's major access routes. Yet Gehry managed to overcome these issues

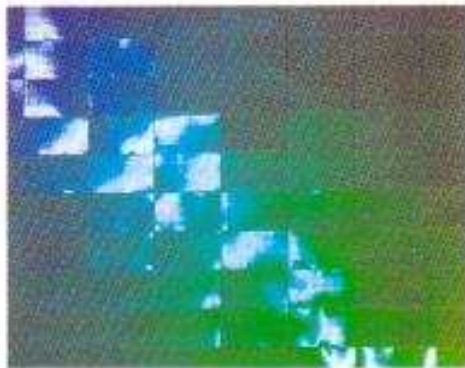




successfully, integrating his avant garde building into the city's urban fabric.

The museum building is an unorthodox combination of connected shapes. The beautiful titanium exterior panels, 0.2 inch ( 5 mm) thick, give the surface a certain tactile feel. It has even been said that this extraordinary building constitutes a novel form of architecture!

Bilbao is Spain's fourth largest city; its metropolitan area contains roughly half of northern Spain's Basque population. Bilbao has served as the industrial and financial centre of the Basque homeland since the mid-nineteenth century. In that era iron ore mined in northern Spain allowed the development of heavy industry in the city along Bilbao's Nervion River. Prior to that, in the medieval era, Bilbao was a major fishing port; and it also handled much of the export of Spanish wool. Today Bilbao's economy revolves instead around modern manufacturing and financial services. After undergoing extensive urban renewal in the latter part of the twentieth century, Bilbao is now Spain's most forward-looking city.



#### ABOUT TED COOKSON:

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