

Foreword

How should we define a collection? What makes it more than the sum of its parts?

We might understand the collection to be organic, responsive, always subject to growth and change. The collection is never static. And, paradoxically, the collection only becomes a collection at the very moment that it cannot be seen all in one take. This realisation, that there is one painting too many for too few walls, starts also to challenge the location of where it might be seen. Certainly the collection cannot begin to do its work in storage, but equally, it need not be bound to one particular place or strategy of display. So it reveals itself in stages, unfolding over time.

The Cranford Collection has commissioned and supported projects beyond the white walls of the museum. It has evolved over the past decade as a response to the challenges presented by new art; how it may be seen, how it may be sustained.

In recent years Cranford has proposed a series of installations in domestic settings, the first of which is presented in this publication. This was where art could be seen, long before the formal establishment of public museums. The return to the house as site of display restores a sense of intimacy with the artwork; it gives us time, and unforeseen juxtapositions. Often that context is informed not by an obligation to historical linearity, but by a desire to tell a deeply personal story that exists in parallel to any official textbook.

A collection can tell us a great deal about the psychology of the collector, but over time it also reveals much about itself as an autonomous entity, finding its shape and identity in those walls, spaces and corners where it is displayed. Not a passive form of embellishment, it challenges the way we move through the space. And in turn the work of art itself is changed by a new set of relationships with other works, and by encounters with those impracticalities of real life, that might never have been possible in a more formal setting. A living collection, lived in...

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