

9 February - 16 June 2013

## **CRANFORD COLLECTION 's ' Out of House' at Sala de Arte, Fundacion Banco Santander, Madrid**

When Paloma Botin O'Shea visited my home in London two years ago it did not occur to me that it would lead us to show works from the Cranford Collection at the Sala de Arte, Fundacion Santander - especially following three exhibitions of such illustrious collections. I admire Banco Santander for its courage, belief and for the vision to invite private collections to tell alternative histories of contemporary art.

Cranford Collection began 13 years ago with the idea to tell a story (and at the time it really was just an idea). I could not have imagined how engaging, how physical, how personal, the process would have proved. How integrated it became into my close-knit family life, supported by those I love most, my husband Freddy, my children and grandchildren.

It was under the guidance of Professor Andrew Renton that I began my journey of discovery. I believed that art was a way of understanding the moment in which I lived, and a way of looking to the future. Andrew became my friend and my mentor. Together we visited museums, galleries and project spaces. We went to artists' studios and engaged in conversations with curators, writers and young gallerists. I could think of nothing else. Andrew filled a huge gap in my education; he helped me to navigate through the complex art world. But it was a true collaboration, as we tested out our ideas and discoveries together. If anything he had to curb my enthusiasm for my new-found passion. I took my time and I learnt how to look. It was all about looking in the beginning and immersing myself in the work itself. .

I came to realise that artists are not afraid to take risks, challenging our perspectives and ideas. Artists reflect on our society and the world we live in, every artist in his/her obsessive way produces work that is personal and intimate, and yet, once a work of art goes out into the world, it has a universal message. To me artists are activists with their own vocabulary; unreadable at first, revealing their meanings over time.

It became evident that the best way to show belief and commitment to the artists' practice was to acquire the works and give it visibility. My goal was to help create a collection that would have a public role and public responsibility, supporting emerging and established artists. In this way the collection has taken on a life of its own I could not have imagined in its modest beginnings.

The greatest revelation has been the opportunity to live with several curated installations of art in the our home where we live. We soon realised that this was the best way to see the collection at work and to set the challenge of what is possible in a domestic setting. Personally, it has enabled us to know works with incredible detail, and for our understanding of them to deepen during the course of an installation.

At the same time we have the pleasure to host many museum and institutional groups. Our home provides a platform to view the works in an unconventional and intimate way. The installations offer perspectives that break conventions and test out relationships between works, in what we hope is a respectful and generous way. And here we are testing it again, showing aspects of the Collection publicly for the first time, in the exquisite space of Sala Santander. It is with immense gratitude that I thank Borja Baselgas, Maria Barrientos Beguiristain, Rosario Maria Meras Lopez, Blanca Mosquete Gomez, and the whole Santander team for this amazing opportunity to tell another chapter of our story.

As much as this exhibition is a first for the Collection, it is a landmark in a continuous journey that has taken us from an idea to a physical reality we could not have imagined 13 years ago. Sometimes a difficult journey to navigate, the emotional rewards have been huge.

Muriel Salem