

## The Espacio Pereda work site receives an artful makeover from fourteen contemporary Cantabrian artists

- *Dress Me Artfully!* turns the hoarding erected around the Espacio Pereda building site into an outdoor exhibition, transforming the landscape of Cantabria's capital.
- Fourteen contemporary artists who were born in Cantabria or have been linked to the region for many years worked before a live audience for two days, creating artworks that reinterpret the Banco Santander Collection and will be on display until the remodel of the Pereda building is completed.
- Belén de Benito, Cuca Nelles, Emma Meruelo, Javier Lamela, Jay Kaes, Manuel Fernández Saro, Néstor del Barrio, Quique Ortiz, Raúl Lucio, Ricardo González, Sara Huete, Sonia Piñeiro, Vicky Kylander and Zaida Salazar are the guest artists.
- Ana Botín, who visited the site and shared her impressions with all participating artists, declared that this exhibition is “the first artistic step on the road to 2023, when we hope to inaugurate Espacio Pereda”.

Santander, 4 July 2021

Banco Santander, via Fundación Banco Santander, has launched *Dress Me Artfully!*, a project that has transformed the cityscape by turning the building works on the south side of Espacio Pereda into an outdoor contemporary art show, which anyone who passes by the former headquarters of Banco Santander on Paseo de Pereda will be able to view and admire.

Under the theme of “Hope and Utopia”, the exhibition reinterprets works from the Banco Santander Collection through the eyes of fourteen artists who were born in Cantabria or have a long-standing connection to the region. The guest artists are Belén de Benito, Cuca Nelles, Emma Meruelo, Javier Lamela, Jay Kaes, Manuel Fernández Saro, Néstor del Barrio, Quique Ortiz, Raúl Lucio, Ricardo González, Sara Huete, Sonia Piñeiro, Vicky Kylander and Zaida Salazar. These creators combined their vision of art with that of the classical and contemporary masters represented in the Banco Santander Collection, selecting works from that collection to serve as inspiration.

This morning they received a visit from Ana Botín, chairman of Banco Santander, and Gema Igual, mayor of Santander, who talked to them about the details of the creative process. During the visit, they were accompanied by Borja Baselga, director of Fundación Banco Santander, and Manuel Iturbe, territorial director of Banco Santander in Cantabria and Asturias.

As **Ana Botín** remarked, “This exhibition is the first artistic step on the road to 2023, when we hope to inaugurate Espacio Pereda. We’ve called it ‘Hope and Utopia’. The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language defines hope as the state of mind that makes what we desire possible, and what we desire is to give the entire city and all those who visit us access to something which, for many years, was only available to a privileged few.”

**Lidia Gil, curator of the exhibition**, explained, “Every version or interpretation of the works in the collection has its own personality, and it’s fascinating to observe each artist’s creative processes. The show is brimming with colour, dynamic energy and a wide variety of artistic expressions, with something for everyone. A vibrant welcome that offers a taste of the artistic and cultural richness of the Pereda project.”

The artists who paid tribute to the Banco Santander Collection were chosen from the regional community, but they are also quite international: for instance, Jay Kaes is a Cantabrian artist living in London who has produced murals and digitised art for Netflix, Sony and the BBC, and on this occasion created a graffiti composition about the illusion of privacy.

### ***Dress Me Artfully!***

The exhibition, created over the weekend, combines different styles and formats—drawing, painting, graffiti, photography, collage—and strikes up a dialogue between old and new through the Banco Santander Collection. In these creative proposals, we find odes to beauty, joy, humour, nature and art history itself. There are also hopeful reflections on the current social situation, feminism, technology and the environment.

The first interventions to appear on the hoarding panels were the photographs of Zaida Salazar, Javier Lamela and Belén de Benito, based on a still life by Josep Amat, one of Rusiñol’s famous landscapes and another still life by Arellano, respectively. The rest of the show was gradually installed over the weekend, two days in which the pieces took shape before the eyes of passers-by or people who came to watch the artists work.

Among their creations, we also find reinterpretations of El Greco’s *Annunciation* by Ricardo González, María Manrique’s *Corridor* by Sara Huete, Andreu Alfaro’s *Charlotte von Stein* by Cuca Nelles and Isidre Nonell’s *Dolors* by Quique Ortiz. Manuel Fernández Saro used a blend of Baroque and contemporary styles, looking to Coello, Sorolla, Uslé and others for inspiration; Emma Meruelo’s work alludes to gender issues, appealing to the goddesses of Patricia Gadea; and Néstor del Barrio recreated the Pereda building through a work by Luis Gordillo, *Crash*. Raul Lucio brings us *Hope*, based on a piece by Amalia Avia, while Sonia Piñeiro offers a vision of nature and shelter

that alludes to José Caballero's *Double Space*, and Swedish-born artist Vicky Kylander expresses movement and joy inspired by Niki de Saint Phalle's sculpture *Ballerina*.

### About the curator, the artists and their works

**Lidia Gil Calvo** (Santander, 1972) was on the editorial staff of *Arte y Parte* magazine. She has given lectures on contemporary art at Espacio C in Camargo, the Museo de Arte Moderno y Contemporáneo in Santander and other cultural venues such as the Museo Marítimo, Fundación Botín and the University of Cantabria. She works as an independent art curator, critic and theoretician. Her lines of research examine the connections between art and science/technology, the dialogue between truth and fiction, and the mysterious/symbolic underpinnings of the arts. She combines these activities with her work at Galería Juan Sillo.

#### **Belén de Benito** (Santander, 1974)

Work: *Plasticland*. Inspiration: Juan de Arellano, *Still Life with Flowers*, ca. 1650–1660.

Beguiled by the beautiful floral still lifes in the Banco Santander Collection, Belén de Benito decided to interpret a work by Juan de Arellano. Her elaborate photograph features a composition that maintains the typical Baroque palette and aesthetic, offering an image that confuses viewers and forces them to think twice. Every element pictured here is made of plastic, a regrettably imperishable and problematic material that dialogues with the ephemeral beauty which a still life traditionally symbolises.

#### **Cuca Nelles** (Santander, 1974)

Work: *Hiding/Discovering Charlotte*. Inspiration: Andreu Alfaro, *Charlotte von Stein*, 1981–1987. Cuca Nelles's emphatic pictorial style plays with material abstraction and figuration to create an enigmatic, seductive composition that features the legs of a woman in an empowered stance, a male figure with the head of a bird, and a masked head inspired by Andreu Alfaro's sculpture of *Charlotte von Stein*, a woman whose close friendship with Goethe was documented in their prolific correspondence.

#### **Emma Meruelo** (Santander, 1975)

Work: *Without Failure*. Inspiration: Patricia Gadea, *Goddesses, Wives, Whores and Slaves*, 1993; Gordillo, *Crash*, 1968; Bores, *Wildflowers*, 1961; Farreras, *Composition*, 1977. Emma Meruelo presents a colourful, dynamic formal synthesis of different pictorial works from the collection, mostly abstract compositions such as those of Gordillo, Bores and Farreras. The piece also alludes to gender issues thanks to her choice of the work *Goddesses, Wives, Whores and Slaves* by Patricia Gadea.

#### **Javier Lamela** (San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina, 1978)

Work: *The Rossinyol Tree*. Inspiration: Santiago Rusiñol, *Avenue of Plane Trees*, 1916, and *Path in a Park*, ca. 1920–1925. With this photograph inspired by Santiago Rusiñol's parks and gardens, Javier Lamela allows us to imagine for a moment that, even in the midst of a city, we have ventured into

a pristine wilderness and come upon a unique, powerfully singular tree. Thanks to the four-metre-long hoarding, an immersive experience is guaranteed. This piece expresses a love of nature and invites us to appreciate, respect and care for it.

**Jay Kaes** (Santander, 1985)

Work: *Illusion of Privacy*. Inspiration: Lacalle, *The Flight*, 1999; Heimo Zobernig, *Untitled*, 2009; Patricia Gadea, *Goddesses, Wives, Whores and Slaves*, 1993; Equipo Crónica, *Adami and Goya in the Living Room*, 1974; Eusebio Sempere, *Penetration of the Square in the Circle*, 1970; Andreu Alfaro, *Generatrix 3*, 1972. In this graffiti, which reflects on technology, Jay Kaes speaks of the illusion of privacy in a world where anonymity is an increasingly utopian aspiration. Its vibrant colours and textures visually immerse us in a distorted digital dream world, creating an evocative dynamic littered with stylistic references to various artworks in the Banco Santander Collection.

**Manuel Fernández Saro** (Santander, 1962)

Work: *A Baroque Work, a Contemporary Work*. Inspiration: Pieter Aertsen (workshop), *Meat Stall with the Holy Family Giving Alms*, ca. 1551; Alonso Sánchez Coello, *Doña Juana de Mendoza, Duchess of Béjar, with a Dwarf*, ca. 1585; José Gutiérrez Solana, *Women Dressing*, ca. 1933; Joaquín Sorolla, *Children Looking for Shellfish*, 1919; Niki de Saint Phalle, *Dancer*, 1966; José Guerrero, *Landscape*, 1967; Juan Uslé, *Layers*, 1990–1991; Abraham Lacalle, *The Flight*, 1999; Heimo Zobernig, *Untitled*, 2009. Allusions to art history are a ubiquitous and defining feature of Fernández Saro's pictorial oeuvre. True to form, in this piece he borrowed elements from many different works in the collection, creating a Baroque clutter that enriches what may be a puzzle of interpretations and even includes the artist's self-portrait, perched on the shoulders of Sánchez Coello's dwarf. His composition is a game, challenging us to see how many references we can find.

**Néstor del Barrio** (Socabarga, Cantabria, 1994)

Work: *Introduction*. Inspiration: Luis Gordillo, *Crash*, 1968. Using architecture as a symbol, Néstor del Barrio rotated Gordillo's composition to create a duplex that represents the arch of the Pereda building, with its traditional form on the left and what it will look like after remodelling—in other words, the altered arch—on the right. There are also references to nature as a utopian element and abstract representations that suggest dynamic energy and moving into the future, with a forceful, fresh, modern colour palette.

**Quique Ortiz** (Santander, 1988)

Work: *Dressing Dolors*. Inspiration: Isidre Nonell, *Dolors*, 1910. The delicacy, serenity and restraint of Isidre Nonell's work *Dolors* are characteristics that Quique Ortiz wanted to replicate in his piece, one of the versions that most faithfully reflects the original. He altered the format and added plant motifs but maintained the elegance and sobriety of Nonell's image, executed with the artist's impeccable technique. A veritable ode to beauty.

**Raúl Lucio** (Reinosa, Cantabria, 1967)

Work: *Hope. No Place for Hate (Palimpsest)*. Inspiration: Amalia Avia, *Doodle Door*. Inspired by Amalia Avia's early street art, this photocollage polyptych layers images that the artist borrowed from walls in London (an homage to Chipperfield's hometown): posters, graffiti, images and slogans related to issues that affect today's societies, summed up in the concepts of racism, gender violence, social inequality and climate change. A content-rich piece of great formal and conceptual power.

**Ricardo González** (Santander, 1976)

Work: *Annunciation on Wildflowers*. Inspiration: El Greco, *The Annunciation*, 1614; Francisco Bores, *Wildflowers*, 1961; Alonso Cano, *The Education of the Virgin*, ca. 1650. Ricardo González presents a fascinating programmatic design in this *Annunciation on Wildflowers*. On one side we see El Greco's announcing angel with the texture of newspaper print, who comes bearing good news: the creation of a centre that will make art available to the public, generating culture, leisure and reflection. On the other, a mantle conceals what is taking shape and has yet to be revealed. The wildflowers in the background, inspired by Bores, symbolise what will blossom once this project is up and running.

**Sara Huete** (Santander, 1958)

Work: *Playing Hide-and-Seek*. Inspiration: María Manrique, *Corridor*, 1975. Sara Huete's work uses collage to form a visual poem. Her compositions juxtapose different elements which, taken out of context, generate new messages and curious iconographies, often seasoned with hints of humour. In *Playing Hide-and-Seek*, Huete playfully multiplies the corridor painted by Manrique and adds a female figure taken from a 1960s women's magazine who peeks out at us, seemingly ready for fun. This collage is the artist's casual, humorous way of alluding to the air of expectation, excitement and surprise surrounding the future Espacio Pereda.

**Sonia Piñeiro** (Santander, 1969)

Work: *Cycles*. Inspiration: José Caballero, *Double Space*, 1971. Sonia Piñeiro's drawings are always closely linked to the rhythms of nature, combining highly gestural abstraction with fantasy as a catalyst of growth and dreams. Inspired by José Caballero's work, this sketch heralds an evocative intervention based on concepts like intertwining, the symbolism of the nest, shelter and growth, thereby clearly alluding to the theme of care and nurture and underscoring the importance of sensibility.

**Vicky Kylander** (Stockholm, Sweden, 1971)

Work: *The Dance*. Inspiration: Niki de Saint Phalle, *Dancer*, 1966. In this interesting exercise in formal analysis and reinterpretation, Vicky Kylander resorted to the basic colours that characterise the oeuvre of the fabulous Niki de Saint Phalle, represented in the collection by the sculpture *Dancer*. These sketches give us a hint of the bright explosion of colour that will dominate her intervention on the hoarding. Sheer pictorial joy.

**Zaida Salazar** (Oviedo, 1975)

Work: *Untitled*. Inspiration: Josep Amat, *Flowers and Little Black Table*, ca. 1980. It is hard not to feel the sense of peace and simple beauty radiating from this symbolic photograph. In her subtle, intelligent adaptation of Josep Amat's work, Zaida Salazar maintains the same floral palette but replaces the table with delicate hands holding a vase whose water is that of the vast sea, stretching out towards the horizon as if inviting us to embrace the hope and promises of the future.

### **About Fundación Banco Santander**

At Fundación Banco Santander, we are actively committed to building a fairer, more inclusive and more sustainable society.

With this goal in mind, we develop initiatives that pursue three main lines of action: the promotion of culture as a tool for understanding the world around us; social outreach to facilitate the advancement of society's most vulnerable members; and caring for the environment to protect our natural heritage.

In all of our programmes, we strive to network and cooperate with social enterprises, working together to face the most pressing global challenges.