

# Belén de Benito

(Santander, 1974)

*Plasticland*, 2021

Photo print on RedBOND

Belén de Benito has always been fascinated by antique still lifes and has selected the canvas *Still Life with Flowers* by Juan de Arellano, now in the Banco Santander Collection. This Baroque painter, who achieved great mastery in the genre of flower painting, offers us a harmonious composition where a basket of roses, anemones, tulips, lilies, daffodils and other flowers occupy the lower half of the canvas. In the upper part, under a decorative architectural motif, two garlands of flowers and fluttering butterflies are represented in a clear allusion to the transience of life and the beauty of what is ethereal and fleeting.

For her intervention, Belén de Benito has focused on reproducing this still life using the photographic technique, trying to simulate the characteristics of old oil paintings. However, she introduces an important variation: all the elements used in the reproduction are made of plastic. By choosing this material, the artist intends to open a line of reflection on different issues. In the first place, she seeks to highlight the existing opposition between the expression *naturaleza muerta* (dead nature) used in Spanish to refer to still lifes; and its English version still life, reflecting on the literal meaning "still alive". In addition, the use of these artificial flowers is a reference to the artist's vision of today's world, a beautiful world, but in which little or nothing is what it seems. Finally, it is no coincidence that she uses plastic, a sadly eternal and problematic material, to represent a still life that traditionally symbolizes ephemeral beauty.

## SELECTED WORK FROM THE BANCO SANTANDER COLLECTION



Juan de Arellano (Madrid, 1614-1676)

*Bodegón de flores* [Still Life with Flowers], ca. 1650-1660