

DRESS ME ARTFULLY!

Creativity and knowledge are vital for driving the growth of a healthy, fulfilled, aware, happy society, because both originate in the marvellous human capacity for imagination, allowing us to envision new landscapes that can propel us towards more desirable worlds. These abilities make us aware of our regenerating power, and sharing them builds a sense of community. Therefore, the creation of a vibrant new hub of art and culture in Santander is welcome news indeed. This centre's promotion and enhancement of the arts, and the determination to make citizens active participants in its processes, may well be the keys to its future success.

That commitment to civic participation inspired the project we are now presenting, *Dress Me Artfully!* Even before completing the remodel of its flagship building, Fundación Banco Santander invited artists from the region of Cantabria (or long-time residents) to "dress" the hoarding around the work site with art, offering a taste of what we will be able to experience in that space when its doors finally open—a kind of "sneak preview" of what lies ahead and a bold statement of intent.

The general theme suggested to the artists, "Hope and Utopia", is deliberately open and optimistic, reflecting an explicit desire to create positive vibes in these difficult times. In addition to this motto, we gave them one more condition: to seek inspiration for their creations in one or more works from Banco Santander's impressive art collection, which fortunately will be housed in the remodelled Pereda building. They rose to the challenge with an incredibly rich, diverse range of choices and creative processes. Observing each artist's contribution represents a wonderful opportunity to experience certain works in the collection, and to discover the myriad ways they can be integrated in each new piece. As the philosopher Boris Groys wisely noted, "We have the illusion that we are perceiving art from the past, when in fact we are seeing contemporary art." This dialogue between old and new makes that coexistence of perspectives even more apparent, underscoring the fact that art is eternal but experienced differently at each moment in time.

Finally, we tried to ensure that the artistic proposals represented a variety of styles and formats—painting, drawing, graffiti, collage and photography—in order to appeal to all types of audiences and gazes. In keeping with this idea of diversity, the artists participating in *Dress Me Artfully!* are multi-generational and have very different interests and ways of doing and seeing things. These artists are Sara Huete, Manuel Fernández Saro, Cuca Nelles, Raúl Lucio, Belén de Benito, Sonia Piñeiro, Ricardo González García, Vicky Kylander, Zaida Salazar, Emma Meruelo, Javier Lamela, Jay Kaes, Quique Ortiz and Néstor del Barrio. We thank each and every one of them for their enthusiasm and dedication to the project, an enthusiasm shared by all those involved, including myself, and which we sincerely hope the public will also embrace. We want to pique people's curiosity and help them to enjoy art as a beautiful way of enjoying life itself—and after all we've been through, we definitely need to rediscover our *joie de vivre*.

Lidia Gil Calvo, curator