

## BY WAY OF A SINCERE CONFESSION - Maria de Corral

Collecting is a matter of choosing, taking sides, accepting the risks involved in trying to manifest a particular conception of a time and offer it to the public for its interpretation. It is an unceasing process of writing, reading and rereading a story, a desire to commit oneself to art and to the possibility of offering a view of the world that only artists can give us.

Collections have their virtues and their defects, they are full of experimental paths, of trials and errors, of diverse propositions in both their languages and their content. They breathe and transmit the difficulties of something that is living with us. They are home to thrilling works weighted with artistic tension and include other works whose value consists in bearing witness to a specific time in art. Collecting always has an element of adventure. There is no formula to determine whether something will continue to have value many years later, except perhaps to trust in one's passion for art and the conceptual rigor of its makers.

A year ago I received a surprising invitation from Jack Lane, proposing that I organize an exhibition of works that I would select from three large private collections that had been recently donated to the Dallas Museum of Art and from the Museum's own holdings. It came just on the heels of the Venice Biennale, of which I had been the co-director, when I had been looking forward to a break, yet the aura of Dallas and my long-standing friendship with Jack Lane encouraged me to accept this new and important professional challenge.

The selection of works from these exceptional collections has been, simultaneously, one of the most gratifying and the most difficult curatorial undertakings I have yet experienced in my professional career. It is gratifying because of the enormous number of marvelous works I have encountered, and difficult because every time I chose one of them, it meant turning down others that were just as interesting.

Although the task was not easy, I was offered every facility in carrying it out and the unstinting support of so many people. At the top of the list is Jake Lane, the Director of the Dallas Museum of Art, and his excellent staff, especially Charlie Wylie and Tamara Wootton-Bonner, who quickly and very efficiently responded to my numerous requests for information, paperwork, details, photographs, dimensions, plans and help with the thousand-and-one other details that require attention for such an ambitious project.

I must make special mention of the marvelous collectors from Dallas, whose uncommon generosity has made this project possible. None of the mistaken clichés that float around Europe about collectors and museums in America can be applied to these model families, who have simply decided to share with their fellow citizens the pleasure of contemplating the exquisite artworks their resources have allowed them to acquire.

Robert and Marguerite Hoffman introduced me to art collecting in Dallas. They both responded with enormous generosity to my curiosity about how one goes

about bringing together a collection like theirs, a collection filled with masterpieces. I also greatly enjoyed the exchange of opinions about the art scene and its evolution over the past twenty years. It is a pleasant surprise to find, outside the world of professionals, people who can enter into the artistic debate with such sensitivity and depth. I will never forget the sincere manner in which they dismantled preconceived ideas about the relationship between collectors and artists and the many ideas they shared with me that shed light on their philosophy of collecting and of giving. During my interviews with the other collectors, they all credited Robert and Marguerite Hoffman as the originators of the idea of the combined bequest.

Deedie Rose, on her own initiative (with, of course, the support of her good-humored husband Rusty, who has nonetheless diligently maintained a detached relationship with the art) has managed to bring together a very interesting collection with neither stridence nor a single out-of-place element. Over many years of traveling around the world, I have rarely found a person as engaging or a collection as interesting and coherent as hers.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to mention the unique duo of Cindy and Howard Rachofsky. The whole Rachofsky story is like a dream come true. The idea of the Rachofsky House, the negotiations with the architect, the building of the collection, the installation, swaps and exchanges, tips and acquisitions. What a fantastic process! The result? A brilliant frame for a splendid collection with nothing left to improvisation.

Allow me, without singling out any of the collectors, to share some of the most agreeable surprises I had while conversing with them.

I learned that they didn't compete with one another; instead, they cooperated and even told one another about possible opportunities.

I learned that the money to purchase works hasn't always flowed as freely as might have been desired. Sometimes it was necessary to sell one work in order to buy another, more appropriate one or to form a consortium, a trilateral group that allowed them to amass the work's asking price.

And, perhaps most gratifying, I encountered the most honorable of motivations: these bequest were made as gifts to society, not as a means to acquire fame or status.

In any choice, one must attempt to balance rational motivations and intellectual analysis with the emotions and passions. Here, however, in making my choices, I have tried to bring out certain moments in the history of art through the four collections. Especially, I have tried to reflect the spirit, criteria and ideas of the DMA and of a group of collectors committed to art and to their community.

Within this exhibition, I have generated numerous discourses in order to shed light on the different forms of our existence as presented in the art of the past sixty years. I have not tried to explain the history of art, but rather to offer the

elements that will enable the viewers to create their own story. I do not believe in history; I do believe in stories, and I believe that it is important for visitors leaving the exhibition to find that the doors to their imagination have been opened, that they are asking themselves new questions, rather than that they have simply found a few answers.

At no time have I used artworks to support an argument or to demonstrate something. Instead, I have sought to bring an unbiased perspective and to place the artists and their works at the center of attention. Rather than elaborating a closed discourse, I have sought to offer threads that can be woven and interlaced in a variety of ways, over and over again, by others as well, because art itself is a source of doubt and questioning, it need not be limited to clear statements or concrete objectives.

This introduction is called “By Way of a Sincere Confession” as an indication of the way I have sought, in this catalog, to reveal my thinking and to share the stimulating sensations I have experienced while working on this project. It is not easy to explain in a single exhibition the meditated decision to reduce well over one thousand exceptional works to just a couple hundred. That such a winnowing is possible at all is a reflection of the freedom that Dallas Museum of Art accorded me and the generosity of the collectors who, one happy day in 2005, decided to create for Dallas a definitive and fundamental place on the worldwide contemporary art scene.