



PHOTO BY TOM JENKINS

DEEP IN THE ART OF TEXAS

KATYA TYLEVICH visits the Rachofsky Collection in Dallas

As a package, Texas comes wrapped in slogans, most of which address the state's size and durability. Don't mess with it, in other words, along with an imperative to keep the capital, Austin, weird. No slogans prepared me for the exceptional art and architecture I saw in Dallas on a recent visit, however. My first time there and, lucky me, I got to attend the opening of Michaël Borremans's exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Art, and

tour the best private collections the city has to offer, the foremost among them being the Rachofsky, which is bequeathed to the DMA.

Night one in Dallas begins with a chatty Uber driver who casually mentions the concealed weapon she has in her car, should anyone dare to (the aforementioned) 'mess' with her—now there's a slogan that delivers! Sadly, our conversation takes a turn from deadly force as

she manoeuvres the car into the dramatic driveway leading to my destination. She presses me for details—"Who lives here?"—as we approach a single-family Richard Meier home. The white rectangular grid hovers over green acres that hold a number of outdoor sculptural works.

Snitches get stitches, so I don't tell the friendly, armed lady that this is the private home of Cindy and Howard Rachofsky, in which they display a small percentage of their art collection and occasionally host intimate events and dinners, like the one I'm attending. Howard Rachofsky had originally approached Meier for the design of a bachelor pad in the late 80s, but not long after the home was completed in 1996, Howard became a married man with a family. He points out that the house is a one-bedroom—one hell of a one-bedroom, if I may editorialize—so the family lived in a more conventional home elsewhere as the children grew

up. The house, meanwhile, served as a living, growing art hall. With time, the Rachofsky Collection completely outgrew it.

Along with collector Vernon Faulconer, Howard Rachofsky initiated a project called The Warehouse, centred around an 18,000-sq-ft exhibition space that opened in 2012 in a smartly renovated industrial building. Rotating exhibitions at The Warehouse draw from the Rachofsky and Faulconer collections, along with works acquired jointly with the Dallas Museum of Art and those on loan from other fine institutions and private collections.

Cindy and Howard eventually moved back into the Meier (or, rather, The Rachofsky), and the house is also promised to the DMA. This kind of generosity is integral to the greater ethos of the collection. Howard calls himself a 'caretaker' for the art and architecture, seeing as it will eventually be public. He regrets

Left
The Rachofsky House, designed by Richard Meier, east view
On view in the front is the site-specific work:
Robert Irwin
Tilted Planes, 1999
Earth, grass and Cor-ten steel

Right
Tom Friedman
Untitled, 2004
Styrofoam and paint



PHOTO BY KEVIN TODORA

the fact that collecting has come to be associated with having 'a big enough checkbook, a nice checklist and an advisor'. He speaks instead of the 'passion and curiosity' that drive an interest in art. When I approach him with the idea of writing an article about his collection, he agrees, but adds the postscript: 'I don't like just puff pieces. I think we've really gone about this [collection] in a way that's less about public acclaim and more about exploring roads less travelled.'

Though he had collected for some years prior, in the last 18 years, specifically, Howard has worked closely with Allan Schwartzman, director of the Rachofsky Collection and founder and principal of Art Agency Partners in New York, to create a strong point of view for the over 900 works under his care. Of interest and singularity is the collection's emphasis on postwar Italian and Japanese art, which grew from an initial focus

on American Minimalism—a spark lit by Howard's work with Meier on the house. The art-filled bachelor pad, in turn, gave way to The Warehouse, a space that allows for a much closer relationship with artworks than do most museums or galleries. Howard describes the design as 'neutral, with the best lighting we could possibly have and rooms scaled to different sizes to allow art of different scale to speak for itself'. Above all, he says, 'We consciously created a space in which it's you, the art and nothing else.'

In 2013, an exhibition called *Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, curated by Schwartzman, opened at The Warehouse (a fantastic catalogue of the same name is available). In its exploration of mostly uncharted links between postwar Italian and Japanese art—and, by extension, history, identity and psychology—that exhibition perfectly illustrates what distinguishes the

Rachofsky Collection.

When I later call Schwartzman, he remarks that Howard is open to 'areas that had not been fully explored in American collecting'. This has resulted in what others have called 'the finest assembly of postwar Italian art in this country, maybe one of the finest outside of Italy,' Schwartzman says. 'The Japanese experts tell me that it is the most extensive and finest collection of Gutai outside of Japan,' he continues, 'and that the grouping of Mono-ha works is the finest anywhere, including in Japan.'

Schwartzman emphasizes that their decisions are driven by the questions 'Is this contributory? Does this add something?' Not just to the collection itself, but also to the museum and community to which the collection ultimately belongs. Texas figures into these considerations. 'In Texas, people embrace their identity and what distinguishes them

from others. But what's unique in Dallas,' says Schwartzman, 'is that you have a circle of people committed to building community resources in a city they love.' The word 'private' hardly seems appropriate for the collection, then.

After I leave Texas, I call Howard again and he expands on his intentions beyond state borders: 'Our mission, if you will, is to present a point of view about art and collecting art in a global sense. Our ambition is to get more and more people from other places to come and visit. It's also about showcasing the community. In the last decade or so, Dallas has become a thriving business centre and a cultural destination.' So Rachofsky extends an invitation to anyone who's interested: 'We encourage people to reach out—and there's no charge.'

www.rachofskyhouse.org
www.thewarehouseDallas.org