

PRIVATE VIEW

She sells Lucian Freud and buys Chris Ofili, but Pilar Ordovas is banned from hanging too many pictures in her own home

REPORT Vinny Lee PHOTOGRAPHS Jefferson Smith



Opposite: Ordovas in
the light-filled kitchen
with Lola the dog.
This page: the living
and dining space, with
paintings by Denise
Lira-Ratinoff





Clockwise from far left: the bedroom, with bath behind the bed; Ordovas in the living room; the dining area,

with artworks by Chris O'Fall; the upstairs sitting room's bookcase wall; the Designers Guild sofa, set against a screed wall





The art world has long been dominated by men, but the scales will tip a little further in the other direction with the opening next week of Pilar Ordovas's private gallery on Savile Row, where art appears to be taking over from another male-dominated profession, tailoring.

Not that Ordovas needs her name above the door to bring it to world attention. She did that three years ago at Christie's – she was behind the highest price achieved by a living artist when Lucian Freud's *Benefits Supervisor Sleeping* sold for \$33.6 million in New York. After a two-year stint as director of the Gagosian Gallery, she has now, at the age of 38, put herself in the forefront of the international art market by striking out alone.

Although her name is linked with eye-watering prices, for Ordovas, the money is secondary. She is in the business because she loves art. Sitting on the Italian cream leather sofa in her South London home, she talks animatedly about how much she enjoys guiding collectors and the thrill of meeting artists. She counts the reclusive Freud among her friends.

"My father was an airline pilot and loved art. I'm the eldest of five children, and the only one who shared his passion. At night, he'd tell

us stories of adventures and I longed to become an Egyptologist – a female Indiana Jones."

Like Indiana Jones, Ordovas is constantly on the trail of some new treasure. "During the 13 years I spent at Christie's, I handled the most incredible artworks, then researched and recorded them for the catalogues. When they were sold, I knew to which collector or gallery they went, so I've built up an awareness of where many of the greatest pieces are located.

"Part of my job now is to advise collectors when and where to buy or sell and to help others to start or expand their collections. With *Benefits Supervisor Sleeping* I knew that, at that time, Lucian was creating fewer artworks and people who had them were not keen to part with them, so there was a growing demand. It was a matter of having the right piece come to the market at the right time."

For all the talk of art, there is relatively little on the walls of her home. She acknowledges this with a smile. "When my husband Nicholas and I bought this house four years ago, it had

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already been developed by the architect Maya Vuksa. We loved the tall doorways and the transformation of the roof space into a bedroom and bathroom with an opening panel, which makes the space so airy. And the rough screed walls throughout catch the light in different ways and look so good that Nicholas banned me from hanging paintings on them."

She has found room for some precious pieces, however. "The two Chris Ofili pictures in the dining area were the first things we ever bought together. And we have two by David Dawson and another by Rachel Whiteread."

The house itself is something of an artwork: the risers on the stairs are made of reinforced glass, so the treads appear to float; the first-floor sitting room has an open bookcase wall that allows light to flood through, and a hot-pink Designers Guild sofa sits brazenly in front of a neutral wall.

The past few months have been busy for Ordovas. Her new gallery, like her home, will be far from run-of-the-mill, specialising in 20th-century and contemporary art, rather than representing individual artists. But it has another role, too. "I love books as well as art, so the office area is lined with bookshelves. It has become a place where I can indulge both my passions," she says. ■

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