

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY



Cristina Iglesias: 'Political commitment is something that appears in your additions to the world'

Q&A with the artist and sculptor on planting carob trees and being friends with her children

by Hester Lacey



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Life and Arts

The works of Cristina Iglesias, 64, can be seen at the Prado, Madrid, outside Bloomberg's London headquarters and elsewhere. She was awarded the 2020 Royal Academy architecture prize.

What was your childhood or earliest ambition?

To be a scientist, an inventor.

Private school or state school? University or straight into work?

Private German school in San Sebastián, Spain. After, I did two years of chemical science at university, while starting to study art. Then I went to London, where I did ceramics and sculpture at the Chelsea College of Arts for two years — and started doing shows quite immediately.

Who was or still is your mentor?

Some artists in history, and my father. He used to tell me: "Do whatever you want, but go deep into it."

How physically fit are you?

I run and take long walks, because it's very good for my thinking.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

Understanding success as having projects, I would say both — and I would add a lot of perseverance and commitment.

How politically committed are you?

When I work in the public realm, I aspire to the construction of a place of gathering that deals with inclusion and communication. A place that affects the citizen's experience of a public space that already belongs to them, and enables them to create their own memories in it, to make it their own. For other works, I travel to places to discover another way to look at the consciousness of nature. Political commitment is something that appears in your actions, in your additions to the world.

What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?

There are some artworks I would love to have close — not necessarily possess.

What's your biggest extravagance?

I'm planting carob trees in a field, to make chocolate with their fruit.

In what place are you happiest?

In my studio.

What ambitions do you still have?

To keep having interesting projects always.

What drives you on?

Difficulties can be very provocative. Sometimes I dream of projects that later prove to be very complex, but challenges are always inspiring.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

Being good friends with my children.

What do you find most irritating in other people?

I have very sensitive hearing and some people speak too loudly.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would she think?

I was struggling to find a language between science, art and architecture then. Despite all the difficulties in my life, she would say, "How lucky you are."

Which object that you've lost do you wish you still had?

A Jaguar that I bought with my husband when we were in our thirties, and a welding machine with which I did several sculptures. It was cobalt blue. The car was graphite.

What is the greatest challenge of our time?

To have more empathy with the other, and to work on long-term solutions for our world.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

My dear ones that have left this life live on in myself.

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

Probably about 8 and a half.

"Hondalea", the new permanent work by Cristina Iglesias, is housed in a former lighthouse off the coast of San Sebastián. "Liquid Sculpture: The Public Art of Cristina Iglesias", edited by Iwona Blazwick and Richard Noble, is published by Hatje Cantz. hondalea.eus