



Why art doesn't have to BREAK THE BANK

You don't have to be a super-rich oligarch to start a collection. Beautiful and compelling original pieces for those on a budget are on offer at next week's Affordable Art Fair. **Ben Luke** tracks you down a bargain

As works changed hands for six figures at the Frieze London art fair last week, it was tempting to think art collection was the preserve of the super-rich. But opportunities abound for those on smaller budgets to find beautiful, compelling pieces.

Next week, the Affordable Art Fair (AAF) opens in London's Battersea Park, and the week after, a sister fair takes place on Hampstead Heath. The AAF, which features more than 100 galleries selling work under £4,000, was set up to draw potential buyers, without them facing the often intimidating experience of going into a Mayfair or Bethnal Green gallery.

The AAF's founder, Will Ramsay, was inspired to create the fair after being discouraged from buying a work by such gallery frostiness.

"Will thought there was a gap in the market, because there must be other people like him," says Romy Westwood, the director of the Hampstead fair. "The art fair is a testament to that – people think it is fun, relaxed and welcoming. They don't feel like they need a degree in art to buy an original piece."

More than 50 per cent of visitors to each fair are new to the experience, so the AAF explains every aspect of buying works, from the different media, to framing and placement. If

you want an oil painting, you can acquire work by a young or not-yet-established artist. But you can also pick up work by leading figures – Stanley Donwood, creator of Radiohead CD covers, has a screenprint available for £288 with TAG Fine Arts, while Marc Quinn's darkly lush Under the Volcano, a digital print with silkscreen glaze, is £900 with Manifold Editions.

Prints are a much misunderstood part of an artist's output, explains Alan Cristea, a leading dealer in modern and contemporary prints who sells work by artists as diverse as Picasso and Julian Opie. "You have to make a distinction between autographic prints and non-autographic ones. A lot of prints that come under the heading of original, limited-edition prints are in fact reproductions of pre-existing works," he says. "Or, you do what I do and commission contemporary artists to do something in a medium that is just as original as a unique work, but that is in an edition."

Printmaking is a wonderful, time-honoured discipline, requiring artists to work with master printers to develop often rich and sumptuous images. In starting to deal in prints more than 40 years ago, Cristea says he wanted to "cover the world in original art, affordably", adding: "I love the idea of this democratic form." Many of his artists' prices go from £600 to £1,000. This affordable approach is also found

at Counter Editions, an online company set up by Matthew Slotover of Frieze and Carl Freedman, a linchpin of the Nineties' British art boom, who owns a Shoreditch gallery. "The idea was to work with artists who I had known since leaving college, whose prices had started to get beyond most people's price range, like Chris Ofili and Rachel Whiteread and Gary Hume and to make prints with them and make them affordable," says Freedman.

Counter produced larger edition sizes, so that instead of making 20 or 40 prints, 200 or 300 were made, bringing the price tag impressively low. So, you can buy a Jake and Dinos Chapman photogravure for £550, a Rachel Whiteread laser-cut print for £750 and a Hume silkscreen for £600. "There's no difference between a print of ours by Gary Hume and those which are in an edition of 40 – it is just that the price is lower," says Freedman.

In recent years, a wealth of institutions have cottoned on to this idea, working with artists to produce original editions. At Frieze this year, many of them, including the Whitechapel and Serpentine galleries, took a booth under the name Allied Editions. The prints are a win-win for all concerned – the buyer gets an original signed work of art produced by an artist under a leading gallery's guidance and the institution gets much-needed financial

support. For a brilliant non-profit gallery with a tiny budget like Studio Voltaire in Clapham, this is vital – from them, you can pick up works by Jeremy Deller and Phyllida Barlow for £125. Romy Westwood sums up the best motivation for buying affordable art. "We want people [at the AAF] to buy original artwork, but also to find something that they really fall in love with."

Famous faces: 'Elizabeth II' screenprint at (above); 'Gorse and Bracken on Rosewall Hill' (above left), both available at AAF Hampstead

Affordable Art Fair: Battersea Park, 25-28 October; Hampstead Heath, 1-4 November (020 8246 4848, affordableartfair.com); Alan Cristea Gallery: 020 7439 1866, alancristea.com; Counter Editions: 020 7684 8888, countereditions.com; Studio Voltaire: 020 7622 1294, studiovoltaire.org; Allied Editions: info@alliededitions.org, alliededitions.org

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Tel: 01580 720000

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We say: The house was built in the 1960s, replacing the original 19th-century residence. The main rooms are all south-facing.



2 BEST FOOT FORWARD Walkers Works, Walgrave, Northampton

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We say: It has been beautifully done but the layout may not suit everyone. There is a private rear garden though.



3 SPLIT-LEVEL SPLENDOUR Flat 2, Victoria Park Road, Exeter, Devon

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