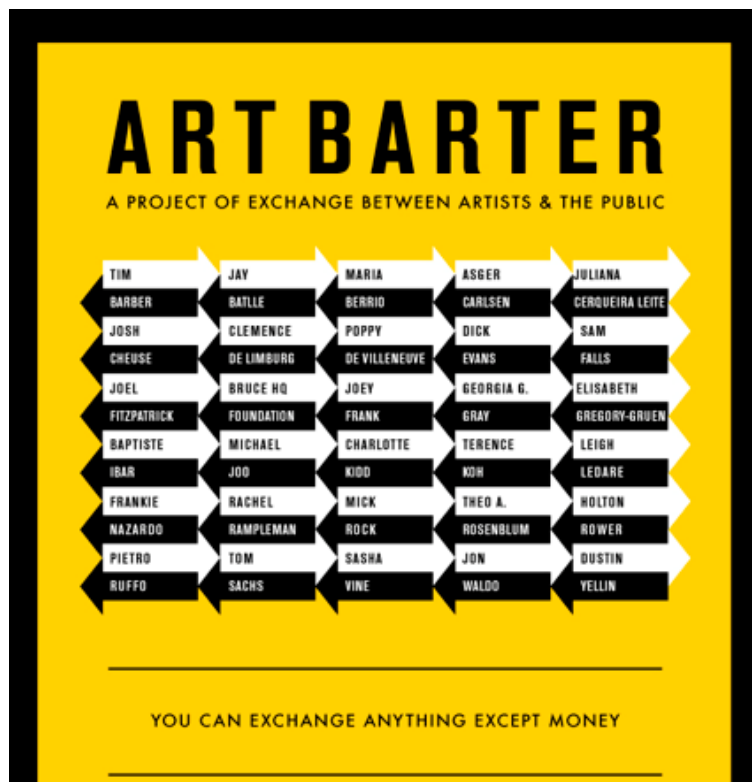


PAPER

Trading Up At The Art Barter

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If you're the type who sits around complaining about how exclusive and elitist the art world is, this event should shut you up, at least for a little while. Meet the Art Barter, the brainchild of curators Lauren Jones and Alix Janta, which launched in London in 2009, headed to Berlin this past June, and will be touching down on our fair city from Dec. 9th to 12th at NP Contemporary Art Center (131 Chrystie St.). Here's how it works: A whole slew of New York artists -- from Terence Koh to the Bruce High Quality Foundation to Tim Barber to Tom Sachs to Georgia G. Gray -- have put their works up for grabs. You, the public, wander around the gallery space on Chrystie Street. When you see something you like, indicate what you'd barter for the piece on a pin board (you can barter anything, from a week-long stay in your Tuscan villa to a personalized ring tone, just not money!), and at the end of the show, the artist picks which barter he/she likes the best. The catch? You will not know whose art is whose till the very end -- so that folks can value the art on its merit alone. Sounds brilliant. We chatted with Lauren Jones about the Barter.

How did you initially come up with the idea for the Art Barter?

Barter has always been alive amongst artists but we wanted to bring it to a larger audience and create relationships between people that may not usually have the opportunity to meet. We were inspired by many things such as the Burning Man Festival, the RCA Postcard Auction

and initiatives such as freecycle, the free shop and our friends all exchanging skills with each other during economically harder times.

The crowd and artists will likely still be bleary eyed from Art Basel. And this event seems to me to be sort of the opposite of Art Basel in a way. Do you agree?

The project is really designed as an alternative to run alongside the art market. We just wanted to open another door for the public to acquire works and for artists to be able to exchange freely with people willing to offer them skills, trades or items. It's also to open a dialogue between the artists and the public and so that new relationships are formed

How did you pick the artists involved?

It's a mixture of making our wish lists for the city we are going to and trying to get in touch. Once we arrive in the city, we start to discover other artists through a series of studio visits which usually lead on to other studio visits. Also just visiting galleries and reading local papers and magazines and blogs.

What, in your opinion, was the best barter that took place in London?

I thought that Abigail Lane's exchange for a bespoke piece of oak furniture was great. She had just moved into a new house and didn't have a bed and couldn't afford to get one that she wanted, so she worked with the designer and he made her a beautiful big oak bed frame which she loves. She was also offered a first class return ticket to Los Angeles to stay in a five-star hotel and have strip dancing lessons. I was also really happy that one of the younger artists Byzantia Harlow exchanged a piece of her art for a place in a prestigious collection. The collector then went on to visit her studio many times and offer her literature to read, etc., becoming something of a mentor.

Are you going to be bartering anything?

We have not allowed ourselves to barter at any of the shows as we know whose work is whose and also what they might be likely to want to trade. Our friends get extremely annoyed about how strict we are with not letting on.

Advice for potential barter-ers?

Don't drink and barter! On our openings people have tended to get rather exuberant and this has resulted in barterers being made that perhaps they might not want to go through with in the light of day (kidney's, foreskin, girlfriend for the night!). Luckily none of the artists have decided to take those offers up, but it is a legally binding contract when you sign the barter form and so if the artist had wanted one of the offers, we would have had to force the barterers!