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Saving on Art the Old-Fashioned Way

By ALICE PFEIFFER

For those of you with a desire to collect art despite the recessionary pinch, here is a solution that doesn't require dipping into your wallet. The Art Barter Event, an art fair where you can pay in imaginative goods and services rather than cash, is taking place at the Rag Factory (16-18 Heneage Street, E1 5LJ; 44-20-7650-8749; www.ragfactory.org.uk), a former studio on Brick Lane, from Nov. 27 to 29.

Fifty artists, from big names ([Tracey Emin](#)) to up-and-comers, ([Boo Saville](#)) offer pieces — without titles or artists' names attached — that people can then bid for. The idea is to encourage people to pursue works they genuinely like, rather than being drawn to a recognizable signature.

The public then fills special "barter forms" that they pin to a bulletin board, proposing their juiciest offers on the art (say, French lessons or a personal massage).

"In a world where the actual piece of work itself and its message or beauty often falls second to the hype or price that is attached," said Lauren Jones, one of the Barter organizers, the event "will encourage people to value the work themselves, not for the name or price tag attached."

The artists then decide which offer they are the happiest with; the result is announced later, via the [ArtBarter Web site](#).

Of course, the event draws on a long history of artists' exchanging work for goods and services, from Modigliani trading paintings for hot meals at canteens in Montparnasse to the Café Rotonde accepting art pieces as payment for coffee.

Old-style bartering allows artists "to go back to basics," Ms. Jones said.



Courtesy of Art Barter

An untitled piece by a (for now) anonymous artist, part of the Art Barter Event in London.

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