

Art Barter - Pick Up an Emin for a Song (Literally?)

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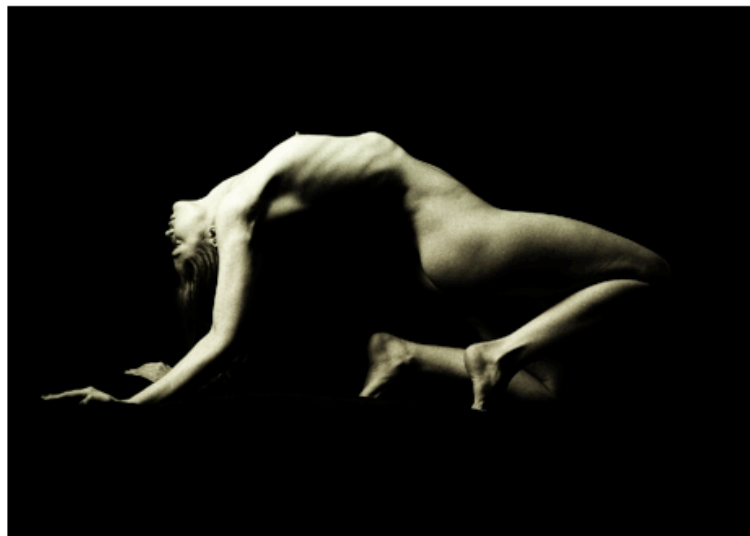
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Art Barter - Pick Up an Emin for a Song (Literally?)

3 tweets 23 November, 2009
by: Miguel Cullen

retweet Aby Rosen, a multi-millionaire real estate tycoon and art collector is showing *Evening Standard* critic Ben Lewis around his collection. Past a corridor of Warhols, *Hirsts* and *Koons*, he arrives at the pride of his collection, a recently-purchased *Richard Prince*. "I love Richard Prince, he's great" says Rosen, folding Sandy Lane-tinted arms across his paunch. "What do you like about this painting?" asks Lewis malevolently. "I like the colouration, you know, the arms, the legs..." Rosen offers evasively, moving Lewis on.

This week's Art Barter exhibition will have the Rosens going pink beneath their perma-tans - it features some of their favourite collectibles, *Emin*, *Turk* and *Collishaw* exhibiting undercover – no names – and available – perhaps literally – for a song.



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What makes Art Barter exciting is the combination of exchange (no money allowed) and stratospheric YBAs: here is a chance for anyone with the right stuff to walk away with a work by an artist who defined our time.

And it is a show for its time. The bottom fell out of the contemporary art market in autumn 2008 following the collapse of Lehman Brothers and, on a more suitably poetic note, the sale of Damien Hirst's *Golden Calf* (in reference to the biblical monument to the idolatry of wealth). Disdain for buck-flashers is at a high, as is the vogue for barter after the growing popularity of exchange festival Burning Man.

Alongside mentioned YBAs are [Gary Hume](#), director Mike Figgis, [Tim Noble and Sue Webster](#) and Nick Hornby (the artist, not the novelist). One lesser-known artist, Ian Bruce (also part of The Correspondents, who blew up Glastonbury this year) is quietly anticipating: "It's going to be sexual favours and trips to people's holiday homes. However what I'd really like in exchange is the chance to paint someone I really admire, like Stephen Fry – for me to have two or three days of his time to paint him." Bruce employs the idea of bartering as life philosophy, and has already reaped rewards: "I met this guy called Jonathan Quearney (a fashionable tailor trained by royal clothier) at a dinner party and asked him where he got his incredible suit. I soon realised that I couldn't afford to pay him for it, so I offered him a painting to decorate his shop. For me these are collaborative exchanges, in the way that I try and understand his art through my own painting, and vice-versa."



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Curators Alix Janta and Lauren Jones are also excited about the prospect. Lauren says: "We have a Swiss taxidermy enthusiast who has fantasies about owning Polly Morgan's work. He has a chalet in Switzerland to barter with. There's an anonymous artist who has been given a grant to build the actual wing of an aeroplane through his council flat in Fulham, and is offering it as his work of art. He is hoping to get a big house in Chelsea in exchange for it."

However, they are keen to stress that the exhibition is not a direct affront to the money malaise running through contemporary art's heart. "This is not designed to go against the contemporary art market, but to run alongside it."

Art Barter is at the Rag Factory from 27th-29th November 2009.