

HUNGER TV

ART BARTER

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Spurred on by the recession and sick of the conventions of the art world, and the hugely inflated prices, curators Lauren Jones and Alix Janta decided to come up to an alternative way of collecting art, and in late 2009 Art Barter was born, a service that allows art enthusiasts to trade (almost) anything for a prized artwork. Now in its third year and trading work by the likes of Tracey Emin, Gavin Turk and Gary Hume, Art Barter's founders tell us why they're only just getting started.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH ART BARTER?

Art Barter was launched in November 2009 in London, we started planning it earlier that year when the credit crunch hit London and everyone around us was looking for alternatives to the current economy. We were both from an artistic background so it made sense for us to start a project involved in the arts. We both also understood the importance of supporting young artists whilst making all art accessible.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE ART WORLD HAS BECOME OVERLY COMMERCIAL?

It probably has, but our goal is not to fight nor to compete with the art market, but simply to create a new dialogue between artists and the people interested in their work.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE CONTEMPORARY BRITISH ART SCENE?

British art is at the forefront of the art world. There are few cities here where the art is so exciting and innovative. There are interesting things to see and discover at all the different levels of the art scene if you're curious enough. With Art Barter and our new venture, Alteria Art, we like to give younger artists the opportunity to be shown alongside artists who are further along in their careers.

EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF ART BARTER TO US, WHAT WHAT PEOPLE USED TO BARTER?

The Art Barter shows anonymously present the works of a selection of emerging and established artists as well as art students. We invite the public to come up with offers and to think beyond their usual way of consuming. The question is: "What do you have to exchange for this piece of art if money is not involved: a service, a good, a property, your time... or what is the artwork worth to you in a non-monetary value?" The oddest things used as bartering tools have included body parts and family members, but we have also had beautiful stories and new relationships that have been born out of the exchanges. We prefer these ones!

HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS THE VENTURE BEEN?

All along, we have had a very good response from the artists and the public, but also from the press. People like new ideas and Art Barter was and still is a refreshing and innovative concept. It's modern.

TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE ART THAT HAS BEEN BARTERED FOR TO DATE.

From a beautiful monoprint of a cat by Tracey Emin, exchanged for 30 hours of French tuition, to the imposing bronze sculpture by Ricard Ricard, a German artist we discovered by knocking on his studio door or an unsettling photograph by Asger Carlsen, whose winning bid was his girlfriend's offer of carrying their first child.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT ART BARTER BRINGS TO THE ART SCENE, DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE ANYTHING?

Hopefully that we will have been a good support for young artists and that one day they will be part of the established ones.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT EXHIBITION – ALTERIA ART – WHAT IS THE POINT BEHIND IT?

We have recently launched Alteria Art. The motive behind it is to support Art Barter but also it gives us the opportunity to work closely with a small group of artists and to produce beautifully handmade, limited edition prints. The first show presents a series of etchings. Again Mat Collishaw, Rachel Howard, Boo Saville, Phoebe Collings-James and Charlie Billingham are all at a different stage in their career. Also the proceeds generated go to Art Barter to insure its future as a non-profitable entity. We also have a shop online where you can buy work from on our website, www.alteriaart.com.

DO YOU THINK THAT ART NEEDS TO BE MORE ACCESSIBLE IN ORDER TO GET MORE PEOPLE EXCITED ABOUT IT?

Yes, it would help demystify art somehow. Some people, even though they are interested in art, get scared by massive exhibitions in prestigious galleries and prohibitive prices on artworks, and prefer to stay away as they know they don't have access to it.

WHAT ARE YOU BOTH WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT?

Lauren is working with curator James Putnam on Glasstress 2013, for the 55th Venice Biennale, alongside event coordination and production with various clients. I am working on my first publication with friend Ines de Bordas. The project is a book of the photographs from the series *Far* by Emile Hyperion Dubuisson, which will be out this summer.

WHAT ARE YOU HUNGRY FOR?

New adventures and to discover new talent! In January, we're going to Istanbul and most probably Buenos Aires in March. We also started planning a road trip in the US, on an "Art Barter bus" to end up in Miami and coincide with Art Basel, so we'll see...

Alteria Art runs until this Saturday, 22nd December, at Benjamin Proust Fine Art Ltd, W1S 2SA, www.alteriaart.com



