

Art Barter



What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet
Juliet, in William Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'

Unfortunately Juliet's lament doesn't ring true in a society consumed by brands and branding, where a v-neck jumper from Primark really doesn't smell as sweet as (a virtually identical) one from Ralph Lauren. The name really is everything...or rather, the instantly recognisable horse logo is. However, I'm not attempting to make an example of Mr Lauren, because this intrinsic tendency to opt for aspirational products is not just simply reserved to fashion and jumpers, but to almost everything we buy.

Damien Hirst is just one example of an artist who has built up an empire- happily embracing the fact he himself has become a brand- 'becoming a brand name is an important part of life...it's the world we live in'. Similarly Tracey Emin's intimate 'confessional art' has adorned Beck's bottles and prestigious gallery spaces. Hirst and Emin, are however just the tip of the proverbial iceberg- ever since Warhol's infamous factory in the 1960's the artists' persona has all too regularly overshadowed the artwork. Serious collectors (investors?) buy into a brand, or a name, not for a genuine love of the canvas/sculpture/concept.



However Art Barter is a new initiative that attempts to address this issue. Curated by Lauren Jones and Alix Janta Art Barter is a four-day event with a difference. None of the works available will be attributed to the original artist, creating an elaborate guessing game, which will encourage members of the public to barter for artwork that they actually like, and not because of the name attached to it. The event will also include a series of lectures and discussions, chaired by industry big-wigs, that aim to open up the (sometimes) elitist art sphere to a wider audience.

Held at the Rag Factory, the former studio of Tracey Emin and Gary Hume the artists involved include some of London's brightest stars, including Tom Gallant, Boo Saville and Polly Morgan. Bidding at art auctions is itself something usually reserved for those with significant amounts of money, so at Art Barter bidders will trade skills and unwanted possessions for the artworks- in fact anything except money. This is certainly nothing new for artists- Picasso exchanged his sketches for meals, the YBA's swapped paintings for tables at the Ivy. But in an uncertain financial world, where the R-word continues to rear its ugly head- bartering is an easy way to offer something you don't want in return for something you do. In fact, everyone's a winner...

Art Barter is open to the public 27-29th November
The Rag Factory
16-18 Heneage Street
E1 5LJ

Posted by Vicki Loomes





1905

just past

1907

