

COLLECTOR'S items

WILL RAMSAY, FOUNDER OF THE AFFORDABLE ART FAIR, TELLS **BEN SPRIGGS** WHY ART IS FOR ALL AND PICKS HIS FUTURE CLASSICS

Collecting art is a lot easier than you might think," says Will Ramsay, the brains behind the Affordable Art Fair, which takes place this and next weekend in two London locations. "Contrary to what a lot of people think, you don't have to be an art expert or a squillionaire to take part."

Turned onto art by an inspirational art teacher — "He called my distinctly not good daubings 'brilliant', which got my attention" — Ramsay made his first purchase, aged 19, in Moscow. "It's no longer my favourite, but it's still a meaningful reminder of that point in my life," he says.

In 1999, after years of shoddy service in various art galleries, Ramsay set up the fairs, each now bringing together more than 100 art galleries, selling pieces priced at £4,000 and under, with an average selling price of about £700. "I felt most galleries weren't catering for the majority of customers," Ramsay says. "There were no prices and you could barely get anyone to acknowledge you."

Thirteen years later and he has brought his art-for-all concept to the rest of the globe, with new launches this autumn in Hamburg, Mexico City, Rome, Seattle and Stockholm. He's transformed the way we buy art, revolutionising the elitist gallery world in the same way that Oddbins and Majestic changed the fine wine market. Yet, while there have been sweeping changes, he admits some buyers are still daunted. "If you still find it scary," he says, "make sure you ask lots of questions and, above all, buy what you like, not what you think you should be buying or what someone tells you to buy."

If you're looking for artistic inspiration, check out Ramsay's pick of the best new artists' work to covet and collect. ●

The Affordable Art Fair Battersea is on today; the Affordable Art Fair Hampstead takes place from Thursday to Sunday. To buy tickets, visit affordableartfair.com



UNDER THE VOLCANO BY MARC QUINN

"I love Quinn's work, and have bought one from his frozen orchid series. He has a large show in Delhi coinciding with the India Art Fair in January, which I can't wait to see." *Manifold Editions. Edition of 150, £900*



34 FLATS BY BARRY CAWSTON

"A fascinating guy. Have a chat with him on the Drugstore stand about his amazing adventures — his middle name could have been Tintin — and the stories behind each of his photos. Ask him about the story behind his Tibetan Cowboy — my favourite." *The Drugstore Gallery. Edition of 12, £1,400*

BRIGITTE BARDOT FADED PALM BY ROSIE EMERSON

"Emerson's work depicts elegant images of women, some harking back to the Roaring Twenties and beyond. Beautiful, highly original and certainly collectable." *Liberty Gallery. Edition of 20, £395*



DOWNFALL BY HOLLIE MACKENZIE

"A delicate and beautifully crafted piece, with clever 'melting' wood. It could easily have been designed for an Addams Family set. Definitely not to be installed beside your real stairs in case you are sleepy or drunk." *Recent Graduates. £3,995*



LONDON BY STANLEY DONWOOD

"I love maps of all types and this, coupled with the thought-provoking words, certainly takes you on a journey." *Tag Fine Arts. Edition of 100, £288*

PLEADING FOR THE CHILD BY DAVID HOCKNEY

"What a treat to be able to snap up an editioned piece by such a master of the art, and at such an affordable price." *John Iddon Fine Art. Edition of 100, £2,200*



ICARUS BY ADAM OLIVER

"I love art that puts a smile on people's faces. Did you pay attention in your Greek mythology lessons? We've been showing his work in Will's Art Warehouse since we opened in 1996." *Will's Art Warehouse. Edition of 12, £290*

