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TECHNOLOGY ART

Click and collect: buying art online

Should you really buy art online? Louisa Buck looks at ARTUNER and Counter Editions, two established contemporary art websites providing an informed and convenient way to collect



BY LOUISA BUCK
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Despite a proliferation of websites selling artworks, the internet is not usually regarded as the best place to buy art. There's no substitute – so the orthodoxy goes – for seeing the real thing and having a direct encounter with a gallerist or an auction house expert. That said, as the art world continues to expand both locally and globally, even the most serious collectors are increasingly buying art by jpeg and there now exists a few carefully constructed contemporary art sites genuinely devoted to providing an informed and appropriate, as well as a convenient, way to acquire art.

“My idea has been to create a platform where you can find what I believe are really interesting artists that deserve to be looked at more closely,” says Eugenio Re Rebaudengo, the 26-year-old founder of the recently-launched [ARTUNER](#), which aims “to bring the intimacy of a traditional gallery experience

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ARTUNER'S Eugenio Re Rebaudengo

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online,” with prices starting at £2,000. To this end, ARTUNER presents a programme of specially curated online exhibitions; each selected and organised by a reputable international curator and with the work on show exclusively available only from this outlet. The inaugural ARTUNER exhibition is a solo show of stunning vintage and modern prints by esteemed Italian photographer Luigi Ghirri (1943- 1992), widely considered

to be one of the most important Italian photographers of the 20th century. Curated by photography expert Filippo Maggia, prices range from £4,000-£16,000. Slated for early 2014 is a multigenerational mixed show curated by Andrew Bonacina, Chief Curator of the Hepworth Wakfield. Rebaudengo describes himself as “a passionate collector” and certainly, as the son Patrizia Sandretto Re Reaudego, whose Turin Foundation houses one of Italy’s most important collections of contemporary art, he comes with impeccable credentials.

“I come from a family of collectors and was lucky enough to grow up surrounded by art and artists” he says. “I want to inspire collectors of all ages and interests and to offer them the opportunity to buy exceptional works of art.”



Rachel Whiteread's Herringbone Floor limited edition print

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Integral to ARTUNER is the presence of Eugenio, who personally welcomes viewers to the site and declares, “it is important to realise there is a face behind this, not a machine”. Another unusual feature for an internet platform is the serious – even academic – spirit of the site, with its programme of curated shows, essays on the artists and works and expert “insights” into subjects ranging from the care and hanging of artworks to art as investment.

A different, but no less dedicated, approach to showcasing and selling art online is offered by [Counter Editions](#), which specialises in the creation of the work itself.

Co-founded by Carl Freedman and Frieze Art Fair co-director Matthew Slotover in 2000, when Freedman remembers “the internet had only just begun and most people had a dial up connection”.

Counter produces specially commissioned, limited edition, original prints and multiples by both leading and emerging artists and is now one of the leading outlets in the UK and beyond for buying contemporary art. “We mold ourselves on traditional publishers – we make our own publications but we also collaborate with other publishers and institutions where we can provide quality and expertise and they can add to distribution and funding.”

However, although it has expanded since its earliest days and now partners with institutions ranging from the Tate, the Serpentine and New York’s New Museum to the 2012 Olympics and the 2014 Winter Olympics, Counter also remains a modestly-scaled and focused enterprise, collaborating closely with printers, fabricators and artists



An artist in his elements



The Tipster: how to buy at an art fair



Ice by Sir Howard Hodgkin for the 2014 Winter Olympics

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and if necessary exploring and working in new techniques and formats.

These have included developing modes of laser cutting for a Rachel Whiteread Herringbone Floor edition (now sold out), and the quest for the perfect shaped teapot for Tracey Emin's limited edition to coincide with her representing England at the 2007 Venice Biennale (still available for £150). Thus what is on offer is a rare combination of the bespoke and the accessible.

Although many Counter works have soared in value – the now sold-out series of Christopher Wool prints originally priced around £300 now change hands for in

excess of £10,000 – Freedman insists that Counter's ethos is not about investment value but to "leave a legacy of work in the world, for people to pass onto their children."

With upcoming new projects such as a Counter Christmas residency (don't say pop-up) at Louis Vuitton's flagship Bond Street store, a specially commissioned print from Sir Howard Hodgkin for the 2014 Winter Olympics (launching on Friday 29 November with special price of £1,000) and a limited edition Tracey Emin embroidered text piece (£750) to accompany her forthcoming show opening at Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami on December 4, along with a new piece by popular young artist Eddie Peake debuting on the website, now seems the perfect time to lay down a few heirlooms.

www.artuner.com

www.counereditions.com

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