

# TIMES ONLINE

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## Let the art shows begin

**Over the next few weeks, London plays host to some serious art and design talent - so where can you snap up a bargain?**



Katrina Burroughs

Hundreds of talented fine and applied artists will be displaying their work at fairs in the capital over the coming weeks. If you are hunting for anything from a bronze baboon to a limited-edition photo of Kate Moss or a glow-in-the-dark ceiling rose, you won't be disappointed. But the trick to getting the best from these vibrant selling exhibitions is to go with a mind open to serendipitous discovery.

DesignArt London (Berkeley Square, W1, from Wednesday until October 19; £15; [www.designartlondon.com](http://www.designartlondon.com)) is a showcase for pieces that perch on the boundary between art and furnishings, sometimes uncomfortably: check out the prototype stainless-steel chaise longue by Cristina Grajales (£30,000). It isn't the softest surface for a lie down, but it might serve as a comfortable resting place for your money, according to David Gill, who for almost two decades has worked with luminaries such as Zaha Hadid and Fredrikson Stallard on groundbreaking, limited-edition works. "Modern furniture has never held its value," he says. "If you resell, it has secondhand value like a car, whereas limited-edition or design furniture appreciates in value." Gill will be exhibiting new aluminium shelves, a table and benches by Hadid (from about £25,000).

Cutting-edge creativity doesn't come cheap - the least expensive products at the fair are glass candle holders by Jeff Zimmerman (£666; R 20th Century) - but this fair is where the design world looks for inspiration, so it's a perfect place to window-shop for ideas. People-watching scores well, too: the crowd last year included Tom Dixon, Jasper Conran and Allegra Hicks.

Origin is the most crafty of this month's fairs (Somerset House, WC2, from Tuesday until October 19; £8; [www.craftscouncil.org.uk/origin](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/origin)), with an enticing array of ceramics. Best in show, among a host of pedigree contenders, are Virginia Graham's eccentric tea sets (cups and saucers from £36, teapots from £120). For pared-down sophistication, Sophie Cook's pieces (see panel, right) are without peer. Origin is aimed at a youngish urban audience - design-savvy but not minted - so prices are low. You'll find small items of jewellery from £10.

Similarly, you don't have to be Roman Abramovich to buy a piece of fine art this month, as the Affordable Art Fair is in town (Battersea Park, SW11, October 23-26; £12; [www.affordableartfair.com](http://www.affordableartfair.com)). Will Ramsay, its founder, says: "We're trying to make art buying as democratic as possible." Richard Heeps's limited-edition photographic prints (see panel, right; from £55) are typical of the inexpensive works on offer. Ramsay also

has a good tip for the art-buying novice on a budget: "It's worth asking if you can pay in instalments – a lot of our galleries are happy to let you do that, though they don't publicise it." Frieze Art Fair (Regent's Park, NW1, from Thursday until October 19; £20; [www.friezeartfair.com](http://www.friezeartfair.com)) is an altogether different animal. If AAF is an amiable labrador, Frieze is a highly strung borzoi, with prices seldom dipping below £1,000. Previous editions have attracted the super-collectors Charles Saatchi and François Pinault, as well as Hugh Grant, Rob Lowe and Claudia Schiffer. Entertaining art-world malarkey is guaranteed. This year, the artist known as Norma Jeane presents three transparent booths in which visitors can smoke, becoming part of a performance that explores how what was once seen as a social activity has come to signify something deeply antisocial. Frieze may have the wittiest smoking rooms in town, but is there anything for the average buyer? Hannah Robinson's Glasgow-based gallery, Mary Mary, is well worth checking out: look for Lotte Gertz's woodcut prints (from £700) and Iain Hetherington's oils (from £2,000).

Many of London's most talented applied artists can be found in a brace of studios in the capital, collectively called Cockpit Arts. CA is holding two open weekends before the end of the year (at Northington Street, WC1, November 28-30, and 18-22 Creekside, SE8, December 5-7; £5/£3; [www.cockpitarts.com](http://www.cockpitarts.com)). Highlights include Naomi Ryder's embroidered duvets, pillows, curtains and cushions. A wool cushion adorned with a picture of a couple kissing costs £90 – what apter illustration of a happy marriage between art and design?

### **Golden wonder £37,600**

The Seneca hall table is by the fabulously named American septuagenarian Wendell Castle, whose work is a hybrid of fine art and design. Trained as a sculptor, Castle is famous for his organically shaped furniture and iridescent surface treatments. His new collection, which will be showcased by Carpenters Workshop Gallery at DesignArt London, includes pieces in his trademark stainless steel and fibreglass. The Seneca is one of an edition of eight, made from gilded fibreglass patchworked with gold leaf.

[www.designartlondon.com](http://www.designartlondon.com)

### **Hell's belles £350**

Belles of Shoreditch: The Whoopee Club is a glimpse of East End nightlife shot by Richard Heeps, whose considerable peer recognition (he has exhibited at The Photographers' Gallery and published four books) has not translated into scary price tags. Available as a 60cm x 50cm photographic print from the Rathbone Gallery at the Affordable Art Fair. [www.affordableartfair.com](http://www.affordableartfair.com)

### **China in your hands from £120**

Sophie Cook's delicate, hand-thrown vessels are serene little studies in colour and form, with the slightly luminous, translucent complexion of precisely made porcelain. Pictured are two small pods (15cm-20cm; £120), a medium-sized pod (25cm-30cm; £140) and a tall bottle (50cm-55cm; £150). Each piece may seem relatively inexpensive, but buyers tend to develop a taste for Cook's delicacies, so they often come back for more – until they own trios or even quintets of her work.

Available at Origin; [www.craftscouncil.org.uk/origin](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/origin). Cook's work can also be found at Cockpit Arts Open Studios; [www.cockpitarts.com](http://www.cockpitarts.com)

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