



All aboard the ART WAGON

Glamorous, stylish and cool, artists are using their kudos to morph into polished brands. The

Roll up, roll up! Today, for one day only, Miss Tracey Emin, one of Britain's biggest art stars and Miss Britain at the Venice Biennale this year, is flogging her wares from the boot of her car down Brick Lane. How very... available. Surely she's not struggling to keep up payments on that shiny new BMW of hers?

No, Emin is participating in today's Art Car Boot Fair, where the public can buy art "products" from a quid upwards direct from about 60 artists. Peter Blake will be selling limited-edition tax-disc holders, while Gavin Turk is selling car boots – yes, real Turk-customised car boots. "Everyone wants to buy into art at the moment," says the fair's co-founder Karen Ashton. "Tracey will be mobbed."

And don't the artists just know it. With Sotheby's and Christie's holding record-breaking sales almost every week, artists are cashing in every which way they can. The modern-day art wagon is bursting with big names peddling art paraphernalia, from Blake's tax-disc holders, or Noble and Webster's necklace version of their F***ing

Beautiful sculpture, to Damien Hirst's pill charm bracelets and skull T-shirts.

Artists, you see, are increasingly sketching out new profiles for themselves as shiny, marketable brands, with trademark merchandise to boot. And the king of them all is Hirst (net worth: £130m). "Damien has re-created the role of the artist," says Waldemar Januszczak, The Sunday Times's art critic. "Now artists do all sorts that they didn't before – they're less pure about it all." What we are witnessing is the commodification of art.

Is art the new fashion?

The art director and graphic designer Peter Saville reckons that what's occurring is comparable to what happened in fashion 30 years ago, when big-name couture designers started diffusion or ready-to-wear lines. "There's a burgeoning audience for contemporary art," he says. "Multiples are like Liebfraumilch. If you're pouring a 12-year-old their first glass of wine, there's no point in getting out the Montagne."



Everyone's making a killing From left, Tracey Emin, Jay Jopling, Damien Hirst, Eton John with Sam Taylor-Wood, Tim Noble and Grayson Perry

market for trinkets and spin-offs is booming, but what about the art, asks **Fleur Britten**

The glamour, the money, the spectacle

Peter Doroshenko, curator of the Ukrainian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, witnessed the growth in popularity at first hand – his party at the opening weekend was so oversubscribed that a fight broke out in the 400-strong queue. Blood was spilt, an ankle was broken and the *polizia* were called. "The art world is similar to Hollywood," he says, referring to its blossoming celebrity culture. No wonder they all wanted in: beyond the velvet ropes, the usual drag queens and kooky artists, with their raccoon-coloured hair and loud, inscrutable clothes, were nibbling beluga caviar and downing Moët with Elton and David, Mario Testino, Marc Jacobs and Miuccia Prada. "The draw is the glamour, the money, the spectacle," says Doroshenko, who shipped in Sam Taylor-Wood, Juergen Teller and Mark Titchner to add "transculturalism" to his pavilion. "People want crazy stuff – after all, we're still talking about Jackson Pollock urinating in Peggy Guggenheim's fireplace 60-odd years ago."

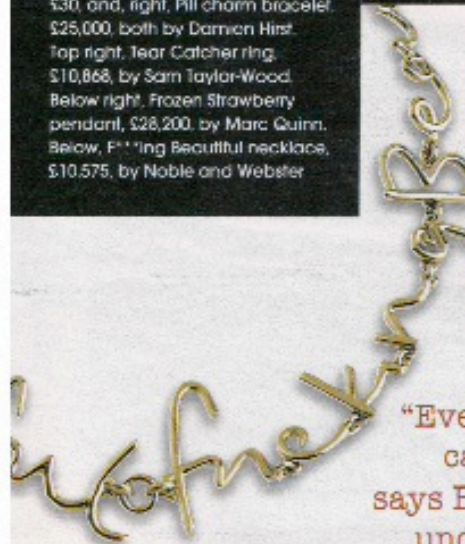
The art tart

This Wednesday is the Serpentine summer party – such a hot ticket that it's a linchpin of the social season. The art tart is the new social pest – if she can't afford the actual art, she can at least buy into a cool, clever talking point, be it a party or a piece of merchandise. "Buying art shows what great taste one has," says Matthew Slotover, co-founder of the Frieze art fair (an event also etched on the social calendar). "It will always attract the more aesthetically sophisticated people." And those who like to think as much.

"Everyone wants to come away with a souvenir to prove they were there," says Januszczak, who points out that Emin's commemorative Biennale bag (an unlimited edition at a very reasonable £7) seemed more desirable than her show, if the queues were anything to go by. Is this the democratisation of art? "No," he declares. "It's not always art, but it's got Tracey Emin's name on, so it will do." Because the artist is now a social icon. "Tracey is the new Marianne Faithfull," Saville says. ▶



Cashing in Above, Skull T-shirt, \$30, and, right, Pill charm bracelet, \$25,000, both by Damien Hirst. Top right, Tear Catcher ring, \$10,868, by Sam Taylor-Wood. Below right, Frozen Strawberry pendant, \$28,200, by Marc Quinn. Below, F***ing Beautiful necklace, \$10,575, by Noble and Webster.



"Every time someone calls me a sellout," says Banksy, "I curl up under the duvet and have the maid bring me another dry martini"

HOW TO SPOT AN ART TART

Wears Anything with a Dover Street Market swing tag; a wardrobe of drop-dead red-carpet glamour (must get photographed at the Serpentine party). By day, she carries a rescue-home dog and a Rolleiflex camera. (She hasn't realised it doesn't work yet.)

Where Lollers at White Cube; PVs (private views) on Wyner Street, the Golden Mile of East London galleries; and artist hang-outs Bistrotique, Rivington Grill, Gary's Place and the Golden Heart, where she chain-smokes Camel No.9s. Never misses Late or Tate, where she says "ooceal" a lot. Nights off are spent sending MoMa e-cards to art heros; listening to Resonance FM soundscapes to collect conversational cribbs; attending life-drawing classes at St Martins (she failed her history of art degree at St Andrews).

Says "It's o-maazing" on repeat (no pretentiousness filter, see); "My psychoanalyst was saying that, out of all his patients, I'm the darkest"; "Oh, there's Sarah Lucas. Oh, Lucas. I f***ing love your painter's shirt! [Shubbed] Oh."

► Louisa Guinness (of the Guinness dynasty), sporting a Taylor-Wood C*** necklace, Turk's used-chewing-gum earrings and something extraordinary on her head, has been curating "art jewellery" since 2003. She has collaborated with Britain's leading artists: Taylor-Wood, Turk, Anish Kapoor, Noble and Webster, Antony Gormley and, most recently, Marc Quinn, on the production of 10 white-gold and diamond Frozen Strawberry pendants (yours for £28,200 each). "Even though you think it's fashion," she says, "the fashion world doesn't get it like the collectors get it. This is like wearing a small sculpture."

"Shut up and eat your dinner," barks Hirst

So, art meets commerce, and it seems, actually, that they get along just fine. More artists — such as Emin, from her car boot — are selling direct. "All artists moan about the 50% that the gallery takes," says Abigail Lane, a young British artist who has moved almost entirely from fine art to selling merchandise such as blankets, T-shirts and scarves through her design company Showroom Dummies. Banksy sells screen prints from his website, Picturesonwalls.com, as well as hosting an annual street-art shop, Santa's Ghetto. Hirst sells "art objects" via his website, Othercriteria.com.

The artist is happy, the consumer is happy, but with all the outsourcing and concept over craftsmanship, what about art? "Shut up and eat your dinner," barks Hirst. "Do architects build their own buildings? Using other people's skills to realise an idea doesn't make it less of an idea. Or, ultimately, any less art. If it looks good, it is good. I'm only concerned that people feel they are getting a good deal." Perhaps it is as Warhol observed: "Art is anything you can get away with."

Only 1% of people are doing things, 99% are grabbing

"What does this mean for art?" asks Slotover. "A White Cube on every high street? It's like Duchamp's urinal and Hirst's dead animals: however countercultural you are, it's difficult to stay out of the market if there is demand."

"We get asked all the time to do things," says Sue Webster, of Noble and Webster. "The London scene is very exciting, very creative, but 1% of people are doing things, 99% are grabbing. It makes you want to become a recluse. I agreed to the F***ing Beautiful necklace because I wanted to wear it. We make things to please ourselves."

Lane, whose designs have been bought by Sarah Lucas, Gary Hume and Sadie Coles, among other art insiders, says there is a snobbery to merchandise because, she says, it's considered a sellout — these projects wouldn't appear on an artist's CV. "Every time someone calls me a sellout," says Banksy, "I curl up under the duvet and have one of the maids bring me another dry martini."

So, where is the art wagon heading? "To the shops," says Saville. "These are our times. Nothing is sacrosanct — art will be ravaged by the masses. Look at what happened to fashion."

It's not all bad, though. Saville believes that fashion can still enrich our lives when it's genuine. "It's the disposable trinkets filling in the gaps that we can do without," he says. And besides, art — trinkets and all — offers more intellectual engagement than fashion. "After all," he says, "there's nothing very challenging in a Prada handbag." □