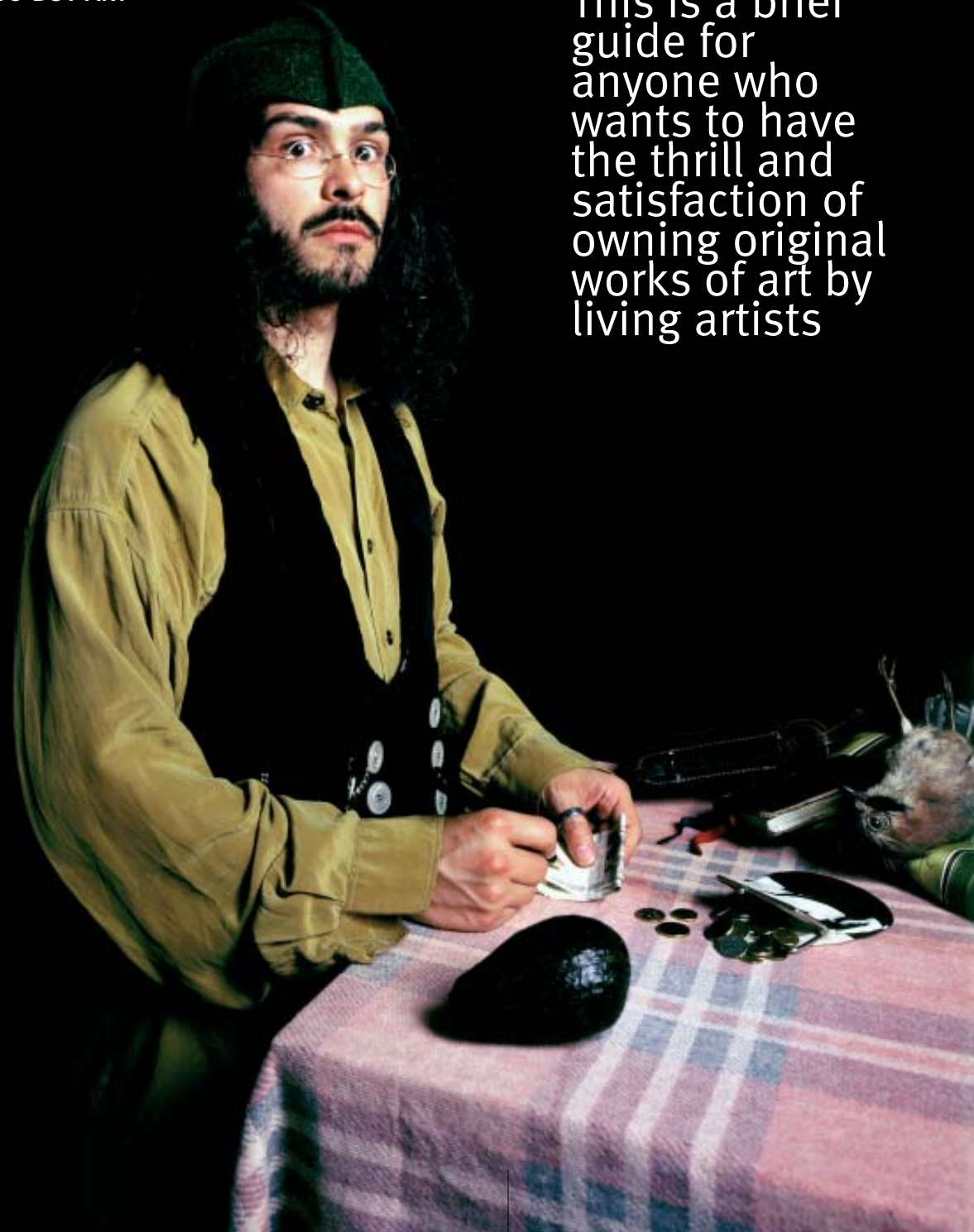


This is a brief guide for anyone who wants to have the thrill and satisfaction of owning original works of art by living artists



Harald Melrose Turek, 'Standing on the History of Art', photo artwork, 2003.

**THE BEST REASON FOR BUYING ART IS BECAUSE YOU LIKE IT**

Buying contemporary and original works of art can make your world a better place.

**art can enhance your home or working environment**

**art can be for a special occasion (a wedding, birthday or retirement present)**

**buying art helps support an artist's career**

This guide focuses on what people often describe as contemporary art or modern art. That means it is usually by a living artist and can include drawing, painting, sculpture, print, photography, an artist's book, video, and CD-ROM.

The best reason for buying art is because you like it, and – like buying anything else of quality – it is worth trying to buy the best you can even if it means stretching your budget slightly, or paying in instalments.

Here are some tips to help you form your own opinions before you buy.

**Look around and get information**

- Visit as many galleries as possible and talk to staff.
- Visit art school annual degree shows which take place in May or June.
- Visit art fairs where you can see many different galleries in one place.
- Theatres, cinemas, cafés and libraries often show art which is for sale.
- Look at art magazines for information about what is happening.
- Look on the internet.



**Budget**

- Galleries have price-lists on display; if not, ask to see one.
- Research the price range of the sort of work that you like and fix your budget.
- You may have to frame, transport or insure your work of art; check exactly what is included in the price you are quoted: the frame, VAT?
- If you want to buy art as an investment, study the market thoroughly or pay for independent advice. Be prepared to invest substantially at the start, either through buying a work by someone well-known (less risky), or spreading the risk by buying a larger number of works by lesser-known or unknown artists.
- Buy works you genuinely like, in case the investment doesn't work out.
- Red dots by a work indicate that it has been sold, a half dot that it is reserved, but ask anyway.

Above: Moyna Flannigan, 'Foxglove' (from the *Femmes Fatales* series), stone and plate lithograph, image size: 26cm x 21cm, 2000. Courtesy doggerfisher gallery/Edinburgh Printmakers

**Where to look**

- Art fairs are held annually in Glasgow, London and many other cities. You can meet gallery staff, attend talks and look at art magazines.
- Artist-collectives – artists sometimes put on group exhibitions of work for sale.
- Degree shows are held for a week in May or June at the four Scottish art colleges (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow). The public can see and buy work from that year's graduates.
- Galleries (commercial dealers) may take on young artists and give them a solo exhibition or invite them to take part in a group show.
- 'Gallery' is a name applied both to purely commercial venues but also to publicly-funded exhibition spaces. Prices may not be available and questions about sales are often referred back to the artist. This may take time, so do persist if you are really interested.
- Open studios are opportunities for buyers and browsers to meet artists and buy from their studios on specific days, or one weekend in the year.
- Print studios or workshops are places where artists make and sell original prints.

For a listing of the galleries in Scotland check the Yellow Pages, the internet or the Scottish Arts Council website: [www.scottisharts.org.uk](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk)

Right: Kenny Hunter, 'Home Guard', (reinforced plastic, Jesmonite and paint), 2003. Photo: Antonia Reeve/Talbot Rice Gallery

**Before you buy, ask yourself**

- Will I regret not buying it?
- Do I want many varied works or a few very distinctive pieces?
- Do I like it for its own qualities or because it reminds me of another work that I can't afford to buy?
- Do I like this artist's work but maybe not any particular example here? (Ask to see more or to be told about future exhibitions.)
- Will it fit the space I have in mind? (Have measurements with you but be adventurous about the size of works you buy and the places where you display them – there are no rules. Check that the size you are given includes the frame – and



check the weight of sculpture before you arrange transport.)

## Frequently asked questions

### Q Why is this work not signed?

A Contemporary artists do not always sign their work. A painting is sometimes identified on the back. Get an invoice or receipt that states exactly who made the work and details of materials and date. You should keep this.

### Q Why is this painting not framed and has unpainted edges?

A This may be how the artist wants it shown. You can make your own decisions after you have bought it but you may be altering the artist's intentions.

### Q Can I visit the artist's studio?

A This is okay as long as you really want to see or buy more work. An artist is unlikely to do a deal if they have a gallery representing them.

### Q How do I know the work is not overpriced?

A If you like the work enough and have done some research, you should feel reassured.

## Ask the gallery/artist

- What track record has the artist got? Can I see a CV and/or exhibition reviews?
- Who else has bought this artist's work; private collectors, companies, museums? Am I a pioneer? (Don't be afraid to be the first to buy. After all Van Gogh only sold one painting in his lifetime.)
- How is it made? Is it fragile? Are there any special ways to display and light it? If so, could you help?
- Can you reserve it for me for a few days?
- Does the gallery offer an interest-free purchase facility?

Below: Michael Wilkinson 'Triptych' (painted wood and glass), 2000.  
Photo: Alan Dimmick/courtesy the Modern Institute  
Right: Martin Boyce, 'Single Mask' (steel, altered Arne Jacobsen Ant chair), 2003.  
Photo: G Schiavinotto/courtesy the Modern Institute



## Limited editions

Many types of work are editioned. Each work is numbered and usually signed by the artist: each one is equal although many people like to buy the first of the edition (1/250) or a low number. There is no logical reason to do so.

Works of art in limited editions include:

**sculpture**, especially bronze

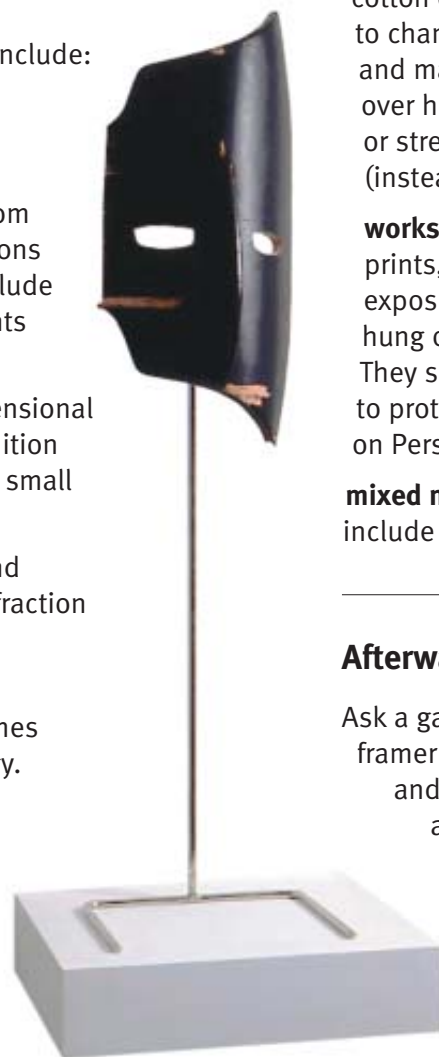
**prints**, often called artists' or original prints to differentiate from mechanically printed reproductions (like a poster); types of print include etchings, engravings, screenprints and lithographs

**multiples** are two- or three-dimensional works produced in a multiple edition by artists. A multiple might be a small sculpture, a poster or a T-shirt

**artists' books** may be unique and by a very well-known artist at a fraction of the cost of their other work

**photographs** can be unique but are often editioned and sometimes combined with digital technology. Large photos are often mounted on aluminium or foamboard

**videos and CD-ROMs** are now regularly created by artists and are usually editioned. The artist retains the artist's copy and then licences exhibition copies. If you wish to buy new technology it is wise to discuss transfer to other processes such as DVD – and beyond.



## Other techniques (and care)

**oil and acrylic paint** – the latter is a cheaper, quicker drying, and modern version of the former.

**support and stretcher** – oil and acrylic are usually painted on to a support of canvas, cotton or linen. Paintings are susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity and may warp or crack. Avoid hanging over heat sources. Screwing the frame or stretcher to the wall with mirror plates (instead of hanging from hooks) may help.

**works on paper** – (drawings, watercolours, prints, photographs) will discolour from exposure to strong light and should not be hung opposite a window or under a spotlight. They should be framed under glass or Perspex to protect them (do not use abrasive cleaner on Perspex).

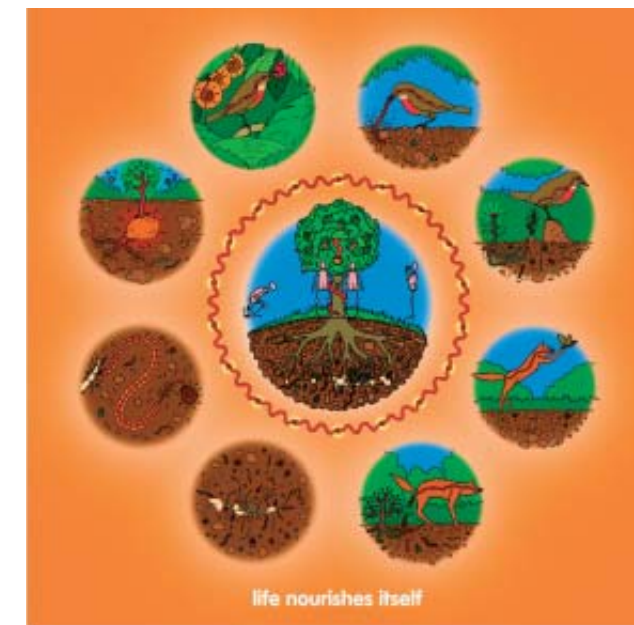
**mixed media** – exactly what it says and could include anything, so ask.

## Afterwards

Ask a gallery or artist to recommend a good framer who will advise you about mounting and framing. Ask for advice about lighting and displaying the work safely.

Take a photograph of the work and keep it with the artist's CV and your receipt, for insurance purposes. Ask to be kept up to date with future exhibitions.

Congratulations!  
You have started a collection



Above: Chad McCail, 'Life nourishes itself' digital print, size varies, 2003.  
Courtesy Laurent Delaye Gallery

Cover image: Peter Lynch, detail of 'having the same picture as your neighbour', screenprint on paper, 2003.  
Photo: Caroline Shuttle/courtesy of Edinburgh Printmakers

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HOW TO BUY ART