



Affordable ART

As Miranda Jessop gets ready to visit Battersea Affordable Art Fair this month, founder Will Ramsay reflects on over 25 years in the business

How it started:

I have always loved art and often visited galleries when I was a child but, when I became an adult, I remember feeling frustrated by how exclusive commercial galleries felt. There was no pricing and there was little information about the artwork or artist. Art brings so much to people's lives and yet so many people were being excluded. I wanted to change that.

The beginnings:

After I left the army in 1996, I set up my first gallery, Will's Art Warehouse in Parsons Green in a bid to making art-buying more inclusive. The response was overwhelmingly



positive, visitors loved the informality, the support and the education. I decided to take it a step further and the very first Affordable Art Fair opened

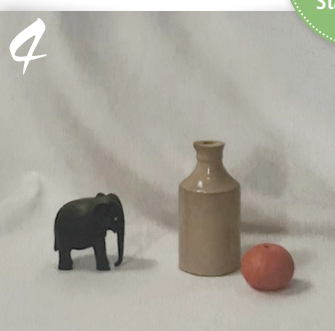
in Battersea in 1999. I was so nervous that we weren't going to have enough exhibitors but somehow, amazingly, it worked and we had 10,000 visitors.

Fast forward to today:

We now host fairs in 14 cities around the world. We make sure each one reflects the personality of the city and the local art scene. Staying relevant is vital to us so we're always seeking out exciting new galleries and progressive artists. Over the years, we've had the enormous privilege of working with thousands of emerging artists, I love hearing how sales at a fair have encouraged an artist to go full-time or rent a studio. Some artists have even gone on to hit the big time and become household names.

Giving back:

Since the beginning, it was important to me to



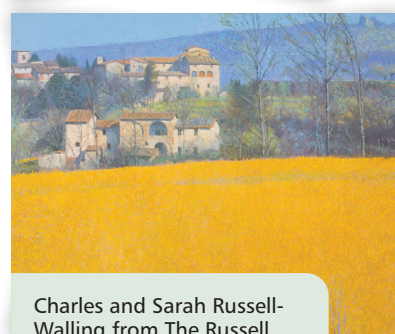
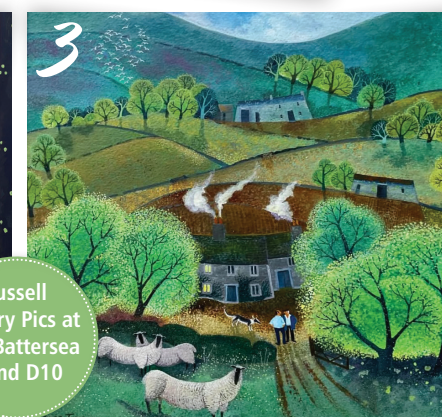
ensure that each of our fairs gives something back. All have a charitable element, whether that's supporting young artists, providing art education, or helping art therapy charities.

Advice for first-time buyers:

Support the artists whose creativity inspires you. Don't be afraid to ask about the artist, it helps you to appreciate their work on a deeper level. Through our fairs, we aim to make art accessible and affordable to all; anyone should be able to own and enjoy art which is why everyone is welcome.

■ Battersea Affordable Art Fair, October 15-19; affordableartfair.com

1 Jenny Wheatley RWS NEAC Sunday outing, Egypt watercolour collage on paper 22" x 31" £4,200. 2 Jenny Wheatley RWS NEAC Heading home 24" x 32" acrylic on canvas £4,200. 3 Lisa Graa Jensen RI Farmers Weekly acrylic inks on paper 12" x 12" £800. 4 Louise Courtneil Tuskless, bottle and Clementine oil on canvas 14" x 15" £2,750. 5 Gerald Engelvin Girl on grey sofa (French artist who we represent in UK) oil on linen 35" x 35" £5,500. 6 Nicholas Verrall RBA ROI Tuscan Spring oil on canvas 32" x 39" £9,250.



Charles and Sarah Russell-Walling from The Russell Gallery, Putney have been exhibiting with the AAF Battersea for over 20 years and were one of the original galleries in Hampstead. This month they will be bringing the artists below to the fair.

■ The Russell Gallery, Putney, russgallery@aol.com

