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Giving the Gift of Art

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By ANNA RUSSELL

Updated Nov. 29, 2013 12:59 a.m. ET

Glenn Horowitz makes a practice of giving works of art on special occasions. Last year, he gave his 14-year-old daughter, Lucy, a Nan Goldin photograph of Lucille Ball, her namesake. For the holidays this year, he plans to give his wife a stainless-steel teddy bear sculpture by Cheryl Ekstrom entitled "TD Bear."

Mr. Horowitz, a rare bookseller in New York, says he has also gifted art to friends, and thinks he has generally been successful. "At least they make certain they have it hung when we come to dinner," he said.

For those seeking to expand their holiday gift-giving list beyond cable-knit sweaters and coaster sets this year, art is emerging as a highly accessible option. A growing number of online and physical retailers are making art easier to buy and to give in all price categories—from an \$18 Andy Warhol Soup Can Puzzle to an \$18,000 Andy Warhol screenprint.

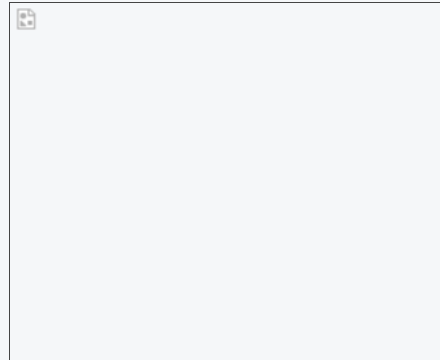
E-commerce sites like Artspace.com, Artsy and Amazon.com, which launched its Fine Art page over the summer, are changing the way people shop for art, expanding audiences and making it possible to research and purchase multi-thousand-dollar works from the comfort of your living room.

"As far as international clients go, it's amazing because they virtually have access to our gallery thousands of miles away," said Bella Nelson, head of sales at Guy Hepner gallery in West Hollywood, Calif., which sells works online through Amazon and Artsy.

Meanwhile, museum gift shops, art galleries, and auction houses are gearing up for seasonal sales, with gift guides, discounts and special-edition products. Art schools are increasingly holding holiday sales, as consumers realize they can be a great option for discovering work from promising young artists at bargain prices.

The Art Production Fund, a nonprofit that produces public art projects, is offering such

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affordable objects as an orange and blue polka-dot towel designed by Japanese artist [redacted] (\$95) and a set of Madeline Weinrib Napkins (\$100). The online retailer [redacted] which launched in 2011, is selling an intricately patterned 2009 painting by Amy Cheng for \$4,750, and a James Welling photograph of waves crashing over rocks for \$500. Swann Auction Galleries is auctioning a print of the famous 1945 photograph, "V-J Day Kiss, Times Square, New York City," by Alfred Eisenstaedt for at least \$15,000.

To be sure, buying art as a gift can be a challenge. Not only is it expensive, but a work of art is a matter of idiosyncratic taste. Add to that the fact that it's often highly visible—how many framed nudes can you hide in your closet?—and giving art seems like a risky proposition. Not everyone wants a Paul McCarthy lithograph of semi-abstract figures in provocative positions hanging above their bed (\$5,500 on Artsy).

Jen Bekman, founder of online-art retailer 20x200, says she steers uncertain gift-givers toward crowd-pleasers like beach scenes, maps of particular cities (especially Paris and New York), sports-theme work and animal photography. On 20x200, she recommends Sharon Montrose's series of photographs, featuring a baby camel, monkey and tiger. "Who doesn't love a baby animal?" said Ms. Bekman.

Most importantly, "always buy from a vendor, a gallery or a website where it can be returned," says Katie Tsouros, co-founder and CEO of Artfetch, a Dublin-based online-art company that began selling art through its website in October.

The e-commerce site Etsy—which sells paintings, posters and sculpture in its "Art" category—saw its biggest sales ever on last year's Cyber Monday (the Monday after Thanksgiving). Amazon has set up a dedicated holiday storefront for fine art, where buyers can browse through artworks filed into several categories like "Outdoor Enthusiast," "Globe Trotter," "Traditionalist" and "Trend Setter." Artspace co-founder and chairman Christopher Vroom said November has been the site's strongest month each year, and it has created an online gift guide, with gifts under \$100, \$250 and \$1,000.

In the past, the online art market suffered from concerns over provenance and authenticity that kept online purchases mainly to lower-priced works, says Clare McAndrew, founder of Arts Economics, a research and consulting firm that studies the art economy.

"This ceiling is gradually shifting upward as new generations of art buyers increasingly demand to transact in art in the same way they purchase elsewhere," Ms. McAndrew said. Online art sales are generally concentrated around midpriced artworks, ranging from a few hundred dollars up to about \$100,000, she said. "Some buyers are graduating up from the lower end of the market, and others have moved down as prices in the high end become increasingly bizarre."



For gift-givers looking for affordable works, original art by emerging artists can be a good bet. Student work is on sale Dec. 7-8 at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C. Artfetch employs experienced curators to identify promising early-career artists from around the world, especially Europe, and presents their work on its website.


For all the trouble that goes into finding the perfect piece, however, a work of art that resonates with a recipient can have a lasting impact. Artspace's Mr. Vroom, who has collected art for about 15 years, gave his daughter a David Levinthal photo of Barbie dolls in bright swimwear for Christmas two years ago. For the holidays last year, he gave his son a Steve Miller X-ray of a snake, with a mouse still visible inside its coiled body.

"It can convey something to my kids that they might not get right now, but they'll get over time," said Mr. Vroom.



Paintings and Drawings


Perhaps the riskiest art gift, but the one with the highest potential return on investment, is an original painting or drawing. "In general, unique works by any artist are more expensive than multiples," says John Auerbach, international managing director of e-commerce at Christie's.






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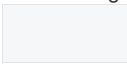
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Since it began selling art over the summer, Amazon has expanded its offerings of  h prices ranging from under \$50 to nearly \$500,000. For \$15,000, a find an 1829 portrait of a **"Bay Horse in a Landscape," by John E. Ferneley Sr.**, below left. For \$30,000, there's a 1932 Arthur Dove watercolor. Shoppers can view works organized by medium, theme, gallery or artist, and can check out customer reviews before they buy (one browser called a graphite study of birds "sweet work").

Artspace is highlighting works that benefit a variety of nonprofits and charitable organizations in their online gift guides, including the New York Foundation for the Arts, which provides support for artists and art organizations. A June Glasson 2012 work in pencil, ink and gouache on paper, entitled **"Before D,"** bottom right, retails for \$1,100. Original drawings by Andy Warhol—from dancing **"Jester Sprites,"** below right, (estimate \$4,000 to \$6,000) to an ink-on-paper Christmas tree (estimate \$12,000 to \$18,000)—will be available through an online Christie's sale from Monday to Dec. 11.

The New Art Dealers Alliance art fair takes place in Miami each December and features work by emerging artists from galleries around the world. Run by the nonprofit NADA, this year's fair, from Thursday to Dec. 8, features work mostly in the \$5,000 to \$15,000 range. The galleries "tend to show younger work which can make the prices more affordable," said NADA director Heather Hubbs. Ahead of the physical opening, shoppers can preview fair offerings on Artsy.

Prints

A special-edition print, unlike a painting or a drawing, is often a more realistic option for gift-givers. "It's a great way to give somebody something that has real value and lasting provenance at an affordable price," says 20x200's Ms. Bekman.

New York-based art retailer Exhibition A collaborates directly with artists to make limited-edition prints, which average about \$200. A black and orange signed print by Blair Thurman, entitled "Street Sweeper," is one of an edition of 35 sold through the company for \$300. A print by Cassandra MacLeod, who has a solo show at Karma gallery in New York through Dec. 7, is available for \$200.

Through Dec. 18, Artsy will host a sale of artwork under \$5,000 benefiting a variety of groups and institutions, including Art in General, a nonprofit organization that supports artists, and the Santa Monica Museum of Art. The artist **Laurie Simmons's lithograph "Walking Petit Four,"** below, which depicts exactly what its title describes, retails for \$1,200 and benefits Independent Curators International (ICI).

At the Gagosian Gallery's Madison Shop in New York, prints are a popular gift item. Roe Ethridge's "Old Fruit," of a bowl of rotting peaches and bananas, is priced at \$1,500. An Urs Fischer silkscreen print of yellow and white flowers, signed by the artist, retails with a custom frame for \$3,500.

Art objects and

Experiences

Holiday art auctions sometimes feature smaller works by big-name artists as well as art experiences like meeting or posing for an artist. Online auction house Paddle8's holiday sale opens Tuesday and includes a miniature "Balloon Dog" by Jeff Koons for at least \$10,000 and three skateboard decks printed in Takashi Murakami's characteristic anime-influenced designs, starting at \$2,000.

In early December, the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, N.Y., will auction off several "art experiences," including the opportunity to be a subject in a painting by Eric Fischl. The artist will photograph the prize winner and incorporate the image into his work (bidding starts at \$1,000).

Those looking to keep budgets tighter might consider objects from a range of museum shops and nonprofit organizations. The Art Production Fund offers towels designed by Jasper Johns, Cecily Brown and John Baldessari for \$95 each.

Textile company Maharam offers pillows in bold patterns by famous designers past and present, including Denmark's Verner Panton, whose black and white geometric designs

retail for \$150. American designer **Alexander Girard's striped red and orange pillow**, priced at \$175, while patterns by Hella Jongerius (\$150-\$330) and designers Ray Eames, (\$150), are also available.

At the Museum of Modern Art store in New York and online, shoppers can find **Magritte dinner plates**, below, for \$16 each and Keith Haring magnets for \$24.

Online art retailer Grey Area is offering a series of artist-designed yoga mats this season (\$90 each). Jon Kessler's mat depicts lines of cocaine on a \$100 bill.

Photographs

Photography offers an affordable entry point into fine art. To give photographs as gifts, "start with something familiar, something iconic and accessible—everyone can relate to certain images," advises Daile Kaplan, vice president and director of photographs at Swann.

Swann is auctioning about 270 lots in a Dec. 12 sale, including a group of 170 prints related to John F. Kennedy's assassination, with images of Lee Harvey Oswald, the Kennedy family and Kennedy's burial, starting at \$4,000. The auction also includes **Alfred Eisenstaedt's 'V-J Day Kiss, Times Square, New York City,'** right, for at least \$15,000.

Through Dec. 17, Christie's is hosting its first "Christie's Unwrapped" holiday sale, marketed towards gift-givers shopping on the high-end. Featured works include an Ansel Adams 1961 photograph, "Fern Spring, Dusk, Yosemite Valley," for \$7,000; a Cecil Beaton photograph of Audrey Hepburn for \$3,000, and one of Henri Cartier-Bresson's best-known images, "Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare, Paris, 1932" for \$25,000.

Online art retailer 20x200, which recently relaunched at youshouldbuyart.com after a nine-month hiatus, has released more than 1,000 editions by about 300 artists since 2007, many of them photographs. William Wegman's famous photographs of Weimaraner dogs are a popular series on the site (from \$60), as are works made using Google satellite images from artist Jenny Odell.

Art Books

In the era of [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and Instagram, high-quality art books can provide a lasting counterpoint to fleeting images. Taschen offers collector's editions and art editions, which often feature signed prints or other collectibles. A limited edition of **"Christopher Wool,"** right, a comprehensive book on the artist's work, comes in hardcover in a clamshell box for \$1,000. An art edition of the same book comes with a silkscreen print signed by the artist, for \$5,000. The art edition of a 606-page book on Jeff Koons, sold with a print by the artist, sells for \$15,000.

Rizzoli this year released "Toulouse-Lautrec and La Vie Moderne: Paris 1880-1910," which includes prints of paintings, watercolors and drawings from the turn of the 20th century in Paris (\$75). Other new Rizzoli releases include "Gary Baseman: The Door is Always Open" (\$45), a survey of the artist's work across media, including his early illustrations and vinyl toys.

Phaidon also publishes special edition art books, including **"Pawel Althamer: Nomo from Mars, 2011,"** far right bottom, which comes with a miniature brass statue (\$1,200). More affordable Phaidon releases this year include **"The Chinese Art Book,"** far right bottom, an overview of Chinese art (\$59.95), and "Art & Place," on site-specific works in the Americas (\$79.95).

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