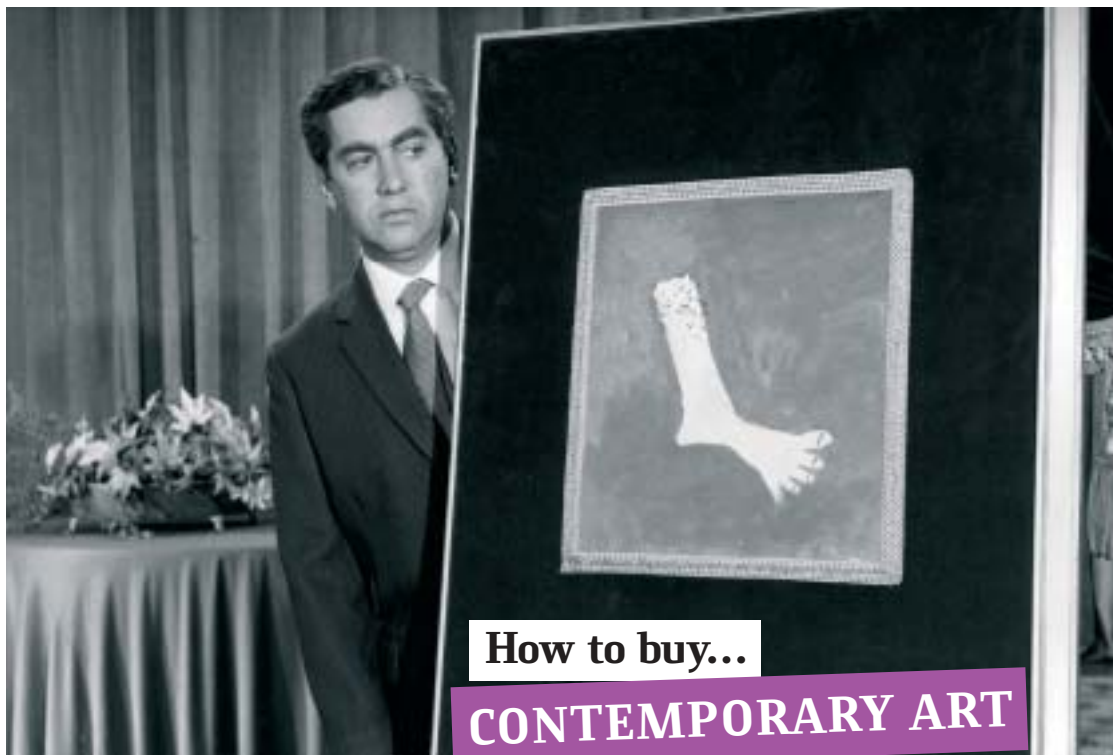


[material world]

Dung beetles, the art of investment, and stiff little fingers



Unhappy Shopper

#8 Miniaturised madness drives the Shopper to the shrink

In Japan, the home of miniaturisation, the company Tuka has come up with an amazing innovation: a mobile with buttons large enough to use with your fingers rather than a cocktail stick. It's given over the whole face to the number buttons.

The idea is that older users find mobiles tricky. A tad patronising, maybe, but dexterity can be a problem. Makers would sooner sell a tiny phone you could lose in a two-week beard than one we can all actually use.

But it's the youngsters who've grown up to rely on mobiles that you have to worry about. Under-30s can hardly arrange to meet each other without mobiles: in 50 years' time, a generation will spend days in search of the bridge club because their stiff fingers can't summon the address on their fingernail-sized smartphones.

If manufacturers don't think now about accessible technology, we'll all find ourselves up silicon creek with a miniaturised paddle.

the gadeteer

This month's most peculiar new hi-tech gadget

So what's the worst thing about your computer? Is it (a) the mouse ball got so grubby that a dung beetle's made off with it; (b) it's so old that it takes half an hour to turn itself off; or (c) it doesn't have a cup holder and a cigarette lighter?

If the latter strikes a chord with you, you're as lucky as you are peculiar. Thermaltake has taken it on itself to design the X-Ray, a device which slots into your computer and bequeaths it both cup-holding and cigarette-lighting capabilities.

To install one in your PC, have a look at www.thermaltake.com, find a stockist, and be ready to burn £22.50 of cash.



ILLUSTRATION HARRY MALT PHOTOGRAPHY KOBAL

How to buy...

CONTEMPORARY ART

Stocks and shares, bricks and mortar – these are the Philistine's paths to riches. Instead, be savvy and sophisticated: invest in contemporary art

1 GET THE KNOWLEDGE

Get to know the scene before you buy anything. The best magazines to read are *Frieze* and *Art Forum International*. Art fairs are useful, too. The best ones are: Frieze Art, London, in October; Zoo Art, London Zoo, in October; The Armory Show, New York, in March; Art Basel, Switzerland, in June and in Miami Beach in early December. Zoo Art is especially good for new galleries and artists. For more about artists, galleries and art fairs, go to www.artnews.info

2 CATCH 'EM YOUNG

When you start collecting, go to graduate shows at famous schools such as the Slade, Royal College of Art, RCA Scotland, St Martins, Goldsmiths and Glasgow School of Art. Don't pay more than £500 (students ask high prices to be taken seriously). Try to go to opening nights – the best works sell quickly.

3 BUY ON THE CHEAP

Look for limited-edition lithographs by renowned artists. These cost £350 upwards – check out www.counereditions.com and www.insidespace.com (if you're easily offended, be careful where you click).

