

VULTURE

...Meanwhile, Out in Bushwick, You Can Collect Art With Only 10 Bucks in Your Pocket

By **Claire Voon**



Can't (yet) afford to drop [\\$179 million on a prized Picasso](#)? What if you only have \$9.99 and want to participate in the art world this week? You'd have a hard time getting a sandwich at the fancy food court at the Frieze Art Fair for that little (and a day pass alone costs four times that amount – and that's just to get in). But at a 200-square-foot storefront in Bushwick, where not (yet, they hope) name-brand artists got together on May 9 for a group exhibition and fundraiser, you could buy anything on the walls for ten bucks (cash only).

The event was hosted by [99c Plus Gallery](#) to celebrate its one-year anniversary since opening in what was formerly a 99-cent store on Wilson Avenue in deep Brooklyn. Wedged between a corner bodega and a tiny real-estate agency and across from [Outlet](#) gallery, it's still trimmed with the original red, white, and blue awning, now updated to spell its full name. Owners [Simran Johnston](#), [Zoe Alexander Fisher](#), and [Riley Strom](#), all in their mid-20s and, early that evening, already overwhelmed by the turnout, had invited nine nearby galleries to showcase 11 of their artists in one tight but brightly lit room. Each had donated one of their artworks to sell to support the young space, home to a gallery for exhibitions and events, Fisher's design store [HANDJOB](#), and an art studio for one

residency at a time. Like at an actual 99-cent store, nothing was actually on sale for less than a dollar, but yellow price stickers valued each piece at just \$9.99.

"It's about the idea of accessibility, making artwork as accessible as the objects you would find in a 99-cent store," explained [Scott Goodman](#), who owns participating gallery [Good Work Gallery](#). "The work you find at an art fair is inaccessible to most people."

Among the 99 offerings: one of [Mark Dorf's](#) prints of digitally altered landscapes; one troy ounce, .999 fine silver bar contributed by Brooklyn artist Elizabeth Ferry; a letter from [Nadja Voorham's](#) grandmother in Amsterdam promising to text the buyer photos of her breakfast for one week; an ink drawing of a nude woman by San Francisco-based artist [Chris Lux](#); an iron-on patch of flowers by [Dennis Witkin](#), who leaves virtual blossoms on grave sites through FindaGrave.com; a USB drive holding a single JPEG of a cat by [Ryan V. Brennan](#); and printmaker [Rebecca Gilbert's](#) flyer of tear-off tabs that read, "Dudes Doing What Dudes Do."

In keeping with the consumer-product theme, each artwork came in a clear, vacuum-sealed bag and was hung from a simple rod hook. Bag toppers replaced wall labels in proclaiming the titles of works and their artists, many of whom were present. With its white walls covered in rows of these packaged tchotchkes – themselves seen as products of collaborative creation by some attendees – the space resembled the inside of an orderly hardware store.

"They're cash only," a young woman waiting in line said, sighing. "Can I Venmo you?" she asked her companion, who wore double braids and heavy denim, from head to toe. Ahead of the pair, Bushwick-based artist [Jordan Barse](#) handed Johnston ten bucks for a painted, nine-piece puzzle of a cat-faced, naked woman clutching a dog made by the collective Destineez Child (which is shown at the gallery [Kimberly-Klark](#)).

Barse herself had also donated something related to her current interest in "fashion and fishing, driven by this idea of people being on hooks and led around places, kind of blindly," she described. The mint-green, thrifted tank top, which she had embroidered with fishermen and the phrase "beautiful flowers, chic forever," was picked up – unbeknownst to her – by [Robert Grand](#), an artist originally from Nashville who now lives in Ridgewood. "I'm just a big fan of embroidery," Grand exclaimed. "It has this cheesy, kitschy aesthetic, but it's also very refined."

All the art sold out in less than an hour, faster than the dollar cans of beer on hand, and almost as fast as it took [Christie's to sell \\$700 million](#) worth of art a few nights later.