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Los Angeles Times

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Affordable art is the new reality

New technologies have given emerging artists a shot at building an audience -- and consumers a chance to buy quality art for a reasonable price.

August 06, 2011 | By David A. Keeps, Special to the Los Angeles Times

At first glance, the shopping cart filled with canvases looks like it might be a work of conceptual art, an installation that equates paintings with groceries. And indeed, that's the intent at Artspace Warehouse on Beverly Boulevard in Los Angeles: paintings so affordable, you might consider stocking up.

"The gallery is very unintimidating," said owner Claudia Deutsch, who brought the concept from her gallery in Zurich, Switzerland, to Los Angeles last year. Artspace Warehouse is laid out with paintings on movable walls that flip like pages in a giant picture book. Neon-pink signs direct customers to sections organized by price, with small-scale original pieces by artists such as Berlin-based Kati Elm that cost as little as \$40.

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"I am sure I sell more because of the democratic price," Elm said.

And that is the point: In this new world, advances in digital printing and Internet commerce have given emerging artists a shot at reaching and building an audience, not through an exclusive show where a few works sell at high prices but, rather, through venues where low-priced creations can sell in volume.

While masterpieces still fetch record-breaking prices at auction, another segment of the gallery industry is still wobbly from the recession. Some dealers are recognizing that in the current

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Artspace Warehouse, which opened about a year ago in Los Angeles, specializes... (Anne Cusack / Los Angeles Times)