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Truffles RIP

Okay. The time has come to talk about art – so much more interesting than truffles and potentially more lucrative. Last week I found myself sitting round a table of five women all discussing art. The extraordinary thing to me was that they were afraid of going into galleries on their own, yet wanted to buy art.

Now, would you be put off buying a dress because you felt shy about entering Hennes? Or be put off choosing a guinea pig because it meant having to enter a pet shop? I am not, but then I realised why. None of the art in most of the galleries that I frequent on Bond or Cork Street can I possibly afford. The starting price for most of what is on sale is £20,000, and at the upper limit (Picasso, Matisse) fifty million quid plus. So for me, the galleries are there simply to educate and amuse.

But suppose I could afford something. Then, I learnt, you feel embarrassed. The staff beam at you ingratiatingly rather than completely ignore you (which is of course far better if you want to look at art). They draw you into private private conversations in private rooms round the back to show you pictures all on your own. If you seem at all interested in a work they will offer to bring it round to your house so you can hang it alongside to your curtains and sofa and see how it fits in. And then, horror of horrors, if they are any good at their job they will try and become your friend. Now, I don't know about you but I have enough friends. It's hard enough finding time to brush my teeth, let alone accumulating new cronies – albeit ones that can tell me all about Canaletto or Martin Creed.