It might look like six bin bags of rubbish but this is £80,000 worth of art

Denis Jones

Pile-up: Irene Bradbury of the White Cube Gallery and the bronze casts of rubbish bags by Gavin Turk, below, who is attempting to use humour to turn the case against contemporary art on its head

By Luke Leitch and André Paine

IF IT looks like a pile of rubbish, that is what it is. However, not any old pile of rubbish — yes, you guessed it, this is art.

Fittingly enough, it is entitled Pile and you would need a pile of money to bag it for yourself. Although it looks just like the sacks of black bin-bags we see all over London, this work is priced at approximately £80,000.

Pile went on show today at the White Cube Gallery in Hoxton as part of Gavin Turk's new exhibition. Turk, who failed his degree course at the Royal College of Art, has become one of contemporary art's biggest stars alongside fellow White Cube artists Damien Hirst and the Chapman brothers.

Tim Marlow, the gallery's director of exhibitions, said: "Many people say contemporary art is a load of rubbish. Gavin makes work that looks like it and uses humour to turn the whole argument on its head. As with all good art, what you see is not quite what you get. These are in fact amazingly intricately-made bronze casts which have been created with immense skill."

Star artist casts bronze into refuse

Turk's exhibition, called The Golden Thread, also includes a huge mirrored maze and a bronze cast of a sleeping-bag. The show opens tomorrow and runs until 28 February.

A gallery spokesman said Pile has not yet been sold, although an anonymous buyer has reserved it.

Pile follows a long line of controversial conceptual works, including Tracey Emin's unmade bed, the Chapman brothers' sex doll and Hirst's shark.

Turk, 36, married with three children, lives in Shoreditch. He has so far maintained a lower profile than other young Brit artists, but he has always had a talent for attention-grabbing art.

In the early Nineties he created his own official-looking Blue Plaque — an ironic statement or pushy piece of self-promotion, depending on which side you take. He went on to create Pop, a lifesize sculptural self-portrait in which he disguised himself as Sid Vicious and Elvis Presley.