

SHOW ME THE NONEY:

ALEC THIBODEAU '90 CREATES HIS OWN CULTURAL CURRENCY



In response to a fund-raising solicitation letter sent by the Academy last year, Alec Thibodeau '90 sent in a generous stack of Noney.

That's Noney with an "N," a currency Thibodeau creates in his Providence, RI, art studio and uses for trade and in-kind transactions. Each note—there are 10 different iterations currently in circulation—is an original, signed and editioned piece of art adorned with a handsome (if somewhat absurd) rendering of a selected Rhode Islander alongside his or her favorite bird and vegetable. Noney's exchange rate, according to Thibodeau, is purely aesthetic and fully negotiable. He himself has used the cultural tender to purchase food and drinks, art, and even once used it to pay an optometrist bill.

A full-time printmaker and illustrator who is more accustomed to creating art for wall display, Thibodeau—who signs each bill with his occasional *nom de art*, Obadiah Eelcut, an anagram of his birth name—came up with the idea for Noney as a means of reaching a wider audience. "At the time, I also started collecting paper currency and began thinking of the notes as little art pieces, entirely separate from any

denominational value," he explains. The parallels between art and money, and their subjective values, also gave the idea some conceptual depth. "Making value itself the subject of art became irresistible. The form was appealing too: art that would be touched and handled; art that would migrate."

What Thibodeau likes most about the Noney project is how it playfully challenges our everyday notions of art and commerce. "By far, the most common reaction I get is people asking 'Is this real?'" he says. "I love hearing it every time. How often do we get to sincerely doubt reality over the course of a day?"

To learn more about Noney, or offer a transaction proposal, contact Alec Thibodeau via the Noney website: www.noney.net.

Homeless vigil

The 15th annual Vigil for the Homeless took place on February 11, and students, faculty and staff joined together to provide food, clothing and financial assistance to local shelters and social service agencies.

