

Untitled, 2013, by Wu Jian'an, from Beijing/New York-based Chambers Fine Art, one of the first US galleries to promote Chinese contemporary artists.

How the East Has Won

IT'S A NEW CULTURAL REVOLUTION AS ART BASEL HONG KONG 2 TAKES ASIA BY STORM.

BY SUE HOSTETLER

In just a few short years, Hong Kong has been transformed from a city that many considered a cultural desert to the fourth-largest global market for contemporary art, according to Artprice, an art market information source. More than \$130 million of work was sold in 2013, partially due to record-setting auctions and the rise of billionaire art collectors in China. As recently as 2008, there were no major art fairs in Asia, but the visionaries behind the powerful Art Basel shows in Switzerland and Miami Beach helped push the cultural revolution forward last year when they debuted Art Basel in the former British protectorate.

Asia's second annual art fair—which opens Thursday, May 15, and features a slate of 245 of the world's most-influential galleries from 39 countries—will help add even more international credibility and exposure to the Asian art market. “Every fair has its own mission and vision,” says show director Magnus Renfrew, “and Art Basel in Hong Kong aspires to provide a fair for Asia of global stature and the highest quality while retaining its unique regional flavor. Hong Kong has long been regarded as the portal connecting the East and the West. It is a major financial hub and as such is designed to allow for very professional and efficient transactions.”

This year's show will be marked by a continuation of the strong programming that is a hallmark of the two other Art Basel shows, but will offer new elements sure to draw collectors from Los Angeles and beyond. The Discoveries sector, which is dedicated to solo and two-person exhibitions by emerging artists, is shaping up to be particularly exceptional. A \$25,000 prize will be awarded to one of

nearly 30 participants at the end of the week, a unique element of ABHK that is not seen at other fairs. Much preshow buzz has surrounded the funky Irish gallery Mother's Tankstation and its presentation of the work of Sydney-based artist Noel McKenna, whose figurative pieces contemplate the human condition and make him one to watch in Discoveries.

Also creating excitement is the Encounters sector—featuring large-scale sculptural and installation pieces—being curated by Japan's highly regarded Yuko Hasegawa of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. “Last year Yuko's selection spurred a compelling discourse around contrasting generational and cultural approaches to artistic practices,” says Renfrew. “I have every confidence that her program this year will again present ambitious works that act as conversation points throughout the exhibition halls.”

And one of Miami's most beloved events—the Film sector—will debut in Hong Kong this year, developed by Chinese multimedia artist and curator Li Zhenhua and hosted in partnership with the Hong Kong Arts Centre. It is collaborations with local institutions such

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CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: *Embroidery Series (Clothing)* by Peng Wei, 2003-2012, which looks like a traditional Chinese robe, but is actually a contemporary expression of the age-old Chinese technique of ink painting; visitors in the foyer of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre for ABHK 2013; Magnus Renfrew, show director of Art Basel in Hong Kong.



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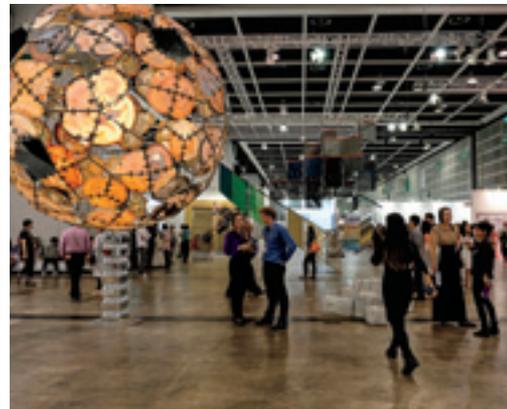
as these that help Art Basel recognize, support, and promote the exploding contemporary art scene in Hong Kong.

Also spurring the boom: The government is pouring billions of dollars into developing a cultural district in West Kowloon, while the new M+—an ambitious Herzog & de Meuron—designed world-class museum slated for completion in 2017—further illustrates Hong Kong’s commitment to its future support of the visual arts. But maybe the most significant indicator is the number of respected western galleries like Gagosian, White Cube, and Lehmann Maupin that have opened Hong Kong outposts over the last few years. These dealers, along with influential homegrown stalwarts such as 10 Chancery Lane, Galerie Ora-Ora, and Pearl Lam, are instrumental in developing and nurturing the careers of artists and collections in the region.

According to Renfrew, these relationships with the local galleries and institutions (including Asia Art Archive, Para/Site, the Asia Society, and Spring Workshop) are imperative to ABHK as they create a show “grounded in the city.” “We want to promote long-term arts infrastructure development and encourage associated programming across the city,” says Renfrew. “The growth of Hong Kong’s museum sector and contemporary arts education will truly impact the larger discourse in the city, and that is something that we aim—through long-term partnerships—to cultivate.”

The fair’s impact and thematic reach is sure to be much broader than just the Asian region. One needs to look no further than the talks planned as part of the Conversations and Salon programs. A discussion titled the “Global Art World/Making Biennials” will feature luminaries Juliana Engberg, artistic director of the 2014 Biennale of Sydney and artistic director of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; Eungie Joo, curator of the 2015 Sharjah Biennial; and Jessica Morgan, artistic director of the 10th Gwangju Biennale and The Daskalopoulos Curator, International Art at Tate Modern, London. The seminar will be moderated by Hou Hanru, artistic director at Maxxi Museum in Rome. “This is a conversation that has real international relevancy, reflecting the transitional reality of today’s art world,” explains Renfrew. Programming such as this, coupled with a rapidly maturing Asian art market and the resurgence of Chinese art exhibitions across the US, and especially in California, will undoubtedly help draw record numbers of highly informed collectors to the fair this month.

With so much anticipation building around the fair, what does Renfrew



most look forward to? “The highlight is exposing new audiences to the depth of work from the broader Asian region, and being part of that experience of discovery when collectors come to know artists they have not yet seen... or when curators have an opportunity to join in dialogue with artists whose work they have long followed.” *Art Basel in Hong Kong takes place May 15 through 18; visit artbasel.com/hong-kong. LAC*

THE LA-HK CONNECTION

Local art insiders give the scoop on the fair.

Susanne Vielmetter, founder of Los Angeles Projects Gallery:

“I am excited about the Asian audience’s response to contemporary art from the US. I am confident that Art Basel Hong Kong will connect the two art scenes more.”

Scott Stover, president of Global Art Development:

“Each year I go to Asia there is a significant increase in the

number of local collectors with an evident increase in connoisseurship.”

Kulapat Yantrasast, architect of the new David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles:

“The mixing of Asian traditional values, current political beliefs, vibrant contemporary cultures, and the larger global contemporary art market has produced vibrant, dynamic, and strong messages in art.”

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