



Embroidery Series (Clothing) by Peng Wei, 2003-2012.

Rising in the East

THE EYES OF BOSTON'S ART WORLD TURN TO ASIA AS ART BASEL HONG KONG LAUNCHES INTO ITS SECOND YEAR. BY SUE HOSTETLER

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

Asia's second annual Art Basel fair—which opens May 15 and features 245 of the world's most influential galleries from 39 countries—will help add even more international 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's a major financial hub, and as such is [positioned] to allow for efficient transactions [between galleries and collectors].”

This year's show will be marked by the strong programming that is a hallmark of the two other Art Basel shows. The Discoveries sector, dedicated to solo and two-person exhibitions by emerging artists, is building particular buzz, and a \$25,000 prize will be awarded to one of the nearly 30 participants of this

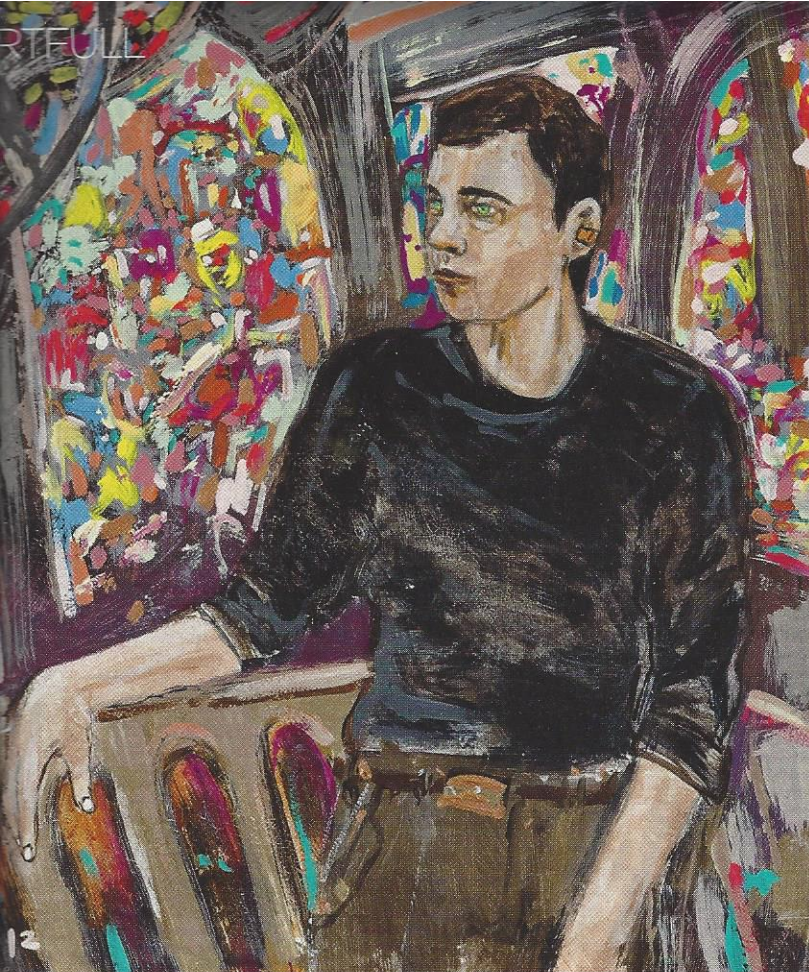
sector at the end of the fair. Also creating excitement is the Encounters sector, featuring large-scale sculptural and installation pieces curated by Japan's highly regarded Yuko Hasegawa of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. “Last year Yuko's selection spurred a compelling discourse around contrasting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

continued on page 66

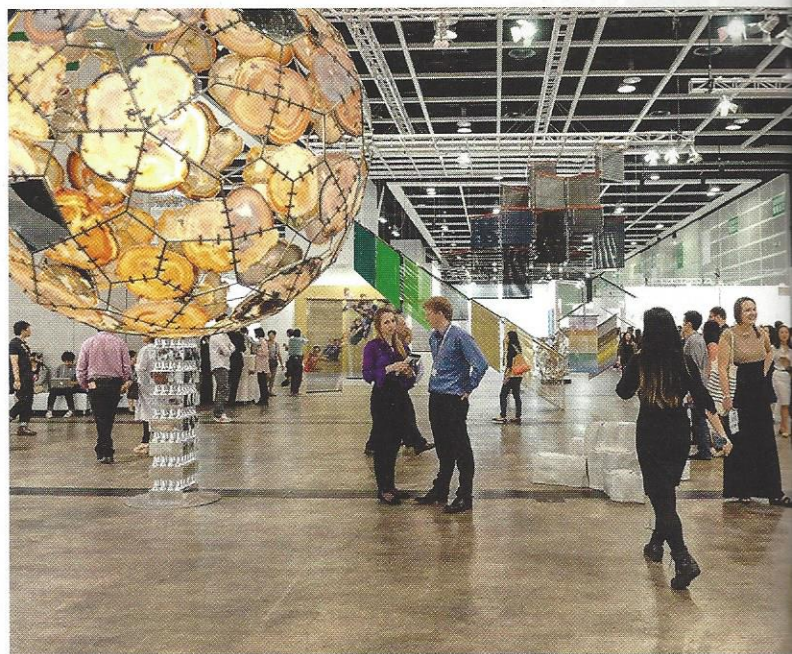


ABOVE AND RIGHT: Magnus Renfrew, show director of ABHK; *Handmade Book Series* by Peng Wei, 2005-2013.





FROM LEFT: *The Churchgoing Satanist (Earplugs)* by Hernan Bas, 2012; visitors at last year's Art Basel Hong Kong fair.



ASIAN INFLUENCES

Top guns in Boston's art world weigh in on the impact of Art Basel Hong Kong.

continued from page 64

present ambitious works that act as conversation points." And one of Art Basel Miami Beach'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.

These collaborations with local institutions help Art Basel support and promote the burgeoning contemporary art scene in Hong Kong. Not only is the government pouring billions of dollars into developing a cultural district in West Kowloon, but the new M+, an ambitious Herzog & de Meuron–designed world-class museum slated for completion in 2017, further illustrates Hong Kong's commitment to the visual arts. Perhaps the most significant indicator is the number of respected Western galleries—including 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 both 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 essential to ABHK as they create a show "grounded in the city." He explains, "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 is sure to be felt far beyond Asia. One need 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 curator of international art at Tate Modern in London—moderated by Hou Hanru, artistic director at Maxxi Museum in Rome. "This is a conversation that has international relevance, reflecting the transitional reality of today's art world," notes Renfrew. Programming such as

"Asian artists have more opportunities than ever before to get critical recognition and to exhibit in their home country. Art Basel's main contributions to the art boom in Asia are increasing consumer awareness of the pleasure of viewing more high-quality artworks, which in turn leads to increased sales and artwork acquisitions."—*Meg Maggio, director of Pékin Fine Art*

"The exciting thing about ABHK is that it underscores the conviction that our contemporary reality is now truly global. Rather than traditional distinctions between East and West, we now encounter a reality that good ideas and transcendent art can come from anywhere."—*Trevor Smith, curator of contemporary art at the Peabody Essex Museum*

"It's fascinating to see the expression of a long-oppressed [Chinese] talent pool. Under political domination, most of these artists were oblivious to the art movements in the rest of the world, yet they emerged with an outpouring of unique ideas generated from their own existence rather than trying to copy the West."—*Elizabeth Erdreich White, founder of Erdreich White Fine Art*

this, coupled with a rapidly maturing Asian art market and the rise of Chinese art exhibitions across the US, will undoubtedly help draw record numbers of savvy collectors to the fair.

Considering that Asia's potential as a major center for collectors and curators is only starting to be tapped, it's no surprise that Art Basel in Hong Kong is generating serious excitement on both sides of the Pacific, and particularly for Renfrew. "The highlight for me is exposing new audiences to the depth of work from the broader region of Asia. It's about being part of that experience of discovery when collectors discover new artists—or when curators have an opportunity to join in dialogue with artists whose work they have long followed." artbasel.com/en/hong-kong **BC**