

*To Be Titled*, by  
Dan Colen, 2011.

# rising in the east

ART BASEL'S FIRST SHOW IN HONG KONG SHINES A NEW SPOTLIGHT ON A HOT ASIAN ART MARKET AND DRAWS TOP NEW YORK DEALERS FOR THIS DEBUT FAIR.

BY SUE HOSTETLER

“Participating in Art Basel in Hong Kong will open up American galleries to an entirely new collector sensibility,” says DC art dealer Craig Appelbaum, whose Industry Gallery exhibits an international group of artists exploring the intersection between interior design and fine art. Almost two years after buying a majority stake in Asian Art Fairs Ltd., which founded the Art HK contemporary art fair, the group behind Art Basel has renamed the event Art Basel in Hong Kong, and will open this year’s festivities to much fanfare on May 23. Boasting work presented by nearly 250 of the world’s leading galleries, the show promises to provide Western audiences with a foundation from which to explore the diverse histories, ideas, and aesthetics of Asia’s

visual arts, a segment of the art market that has skyrocketed in recent years.

Magnus Renfrew, Art Basel’s Director Asia, has overseen the transformation and is confident that both attendees and participants will be impressed. “With an emphasis on the highest quality work

“We want to be part of the cultural surge in this dynamic city.”

—MAGNUS RENFREW

Art Basel’s Director Asia Magnus Renfrew. BELOW: A bird’s-eye view of Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District.



and presentation,” Renfrew says, “the fair will showcase artworks by more than 3,000 artists—ranging from young stars to the modern masters of the early 20th to 21st centuries, hailing from both Asia and the West.” Renfrew believes that Hong Kong is the natural home for a major international art fair. “We are geographically positioned at the heart of Asia, and we are the region’s financial center,” he offers. “There is no tax on the import or export of art, and Hong Kong has an increasingly expanding cultural sector and a culturally interested population.”

Many eyes will be on the Insights section of the fair, which highlights projects specifically devised for the event by 47 galleries in Asia and the Asia-Pacific regions. The Discoveries segment will likely be the most experimental, presenting solo and two-person exhibitions by emerging artists and, in an exciting twist, featuring a \$25,000 prize. But Renfrew notes that the fair is also attractive because of its outstanding ancillary activities. “In addition to the quality of art brought by our galleries, Art Basel is known worldwide for the parallel programming surrounding our shows,” he says. “That includes conversations and salon discussion panels, as well as ambitious collaborations with powerhouse local partners, including museums and other institutions.”

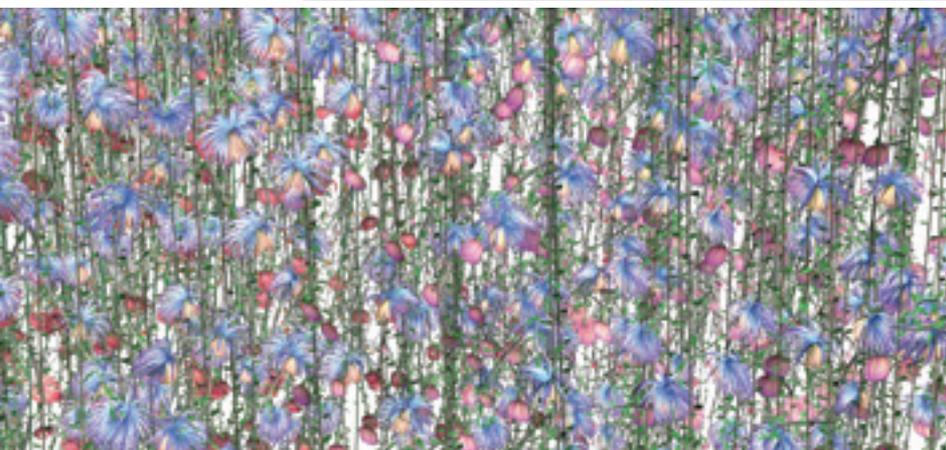
Special exhibitions and events at local galleries are poised to draw immense interest. The Hong Kong gallery scene has been invigorated over the past few years by the arrival of major international players like Gagosian Gallery and White Cube, joining local stalwarts like Hanart TZ Gallery (well-known for championing emerging Chinese artists). The

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*Dollar Sign*, by Andy Warhol, 1981.  
BELOW:  
*Rapunzel*, by Jennifer Steinkamp, 2010.



“There is a sense of [unparalleled] energy in the Asian market.”

—CRAIG APPELBAUM

worked diligently to record and save materials about art across Asia and to make them accessible to the public, will be hosting a series of panel discussions as well as a keynote lecture.

Comparisons are being drawn between today’s Hong Kong art market and that which existed 10 years ago in Miami Beach. “The market is in a relatively early stage of development here, much like the atmosphere in [South Florida] when we opened there,” says Renfrew. “We want to be part of the cultural surge in this dynamic city, and the show provides the perfect global platform for that.” Adds gallerist Appelbaum: “There is a sense of excitement and energy in the Asian market at the moment that is unparalleled, even in America or Europe. Having exhibited in Asia, what I find most exhilarating is seeing how the market there has embraced young, emerging contemporary talent instantly.” **CF**

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multitude of special exhibitions and events at Hong Kong cultural institutions and not-for-profits is dizzying. One of the venues will be the Asia Art Archive, which has grown from a single bookshelf in 2000 to more than 35,000 records of both physical and digital pieces. This unique institution, which has



## A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Two Washington art experts share insights on Art Basel in Hong Kong.



TOP: View of Xu Bing’s exhibition “Word Play” at the Sackler; ABOVE: Curator Carol Huh.

“The Freer and Sackler [galleries] have a long history of exhibiting and contributing to scholarships on Asian art,” says Carol Huh, Curator of Contemporary Asian Art at the Smithsonian’s Museums of Asian Art. “The [museums’] depth of expertise, stellar collections, and scholarly

resources on Asian art and culture can provide a very helpful context for understanding many of the works and practices of contemporary Asian artists.” When discussing Art Basel in Hong Kong, DC gallery owner Craig Appelbaum senses an affinity. “I see a connection between DC and the Asian market; both have a history of being underexposed to contemporary art and design, and it is exciting that it is changing so rapidly now.” Below, Huh and Appelbaum describe what is exciting about art from the region and what not to miss.

**At the show:** At the top of every visitor’s list should be the fair’s new Insights sector, a contextual and thematic presentation featuring work from 47 galleries throughout Asia and the Pacific. Also see the Encounters section, organized by celebrated Japanese curator Yuko Hasegawa, presenting oversized sculptural and installation works.

**Local galleries:** Appelbaum says, “It’s no [wonder] you see major galleries opening up in Hong Kong, like Lehmann Maupin.” Don’t miss the Pedder Building, where many of the blue-chip galleries like Gagosian, Pearl Lam, and now Lehmann Maupin are located. The Hong Kong gallery of London-based White Cube is just down the street as well.

**Local institutions:** The Asia Art Archive will host an independent program of talks during Art Basel in Hong Kong, as it did during the ART HK international art fairs. “This series of discussions addresses important issues affecting the art world,” Huh says, “and offers an opportunity for a substantive, informative experience during the fair.”