

*The Churchgoing Satanist (Earplugs)*, 2012, by Miami-born artist Hernan Bas, is among the works being exhibited at Art Basel in Hong Kong.

# How the East Has Won

IT'S A NEW CULTURAL REVOLUTION AS ART BASEL IN HONG KONG 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 into the fourth-largest global market for contemporary art, according to Artprice, an art market information source, with more than \$130 million 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, but the visionaries behind the powerful 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 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 more 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. 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

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Magnus Renfrew

This year's event at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre features 245 of the world's most influential galleries from 39 countries.

awarded to one of nearly 30 participants of this sector at the end of the week, a unique element of AB in HK 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.

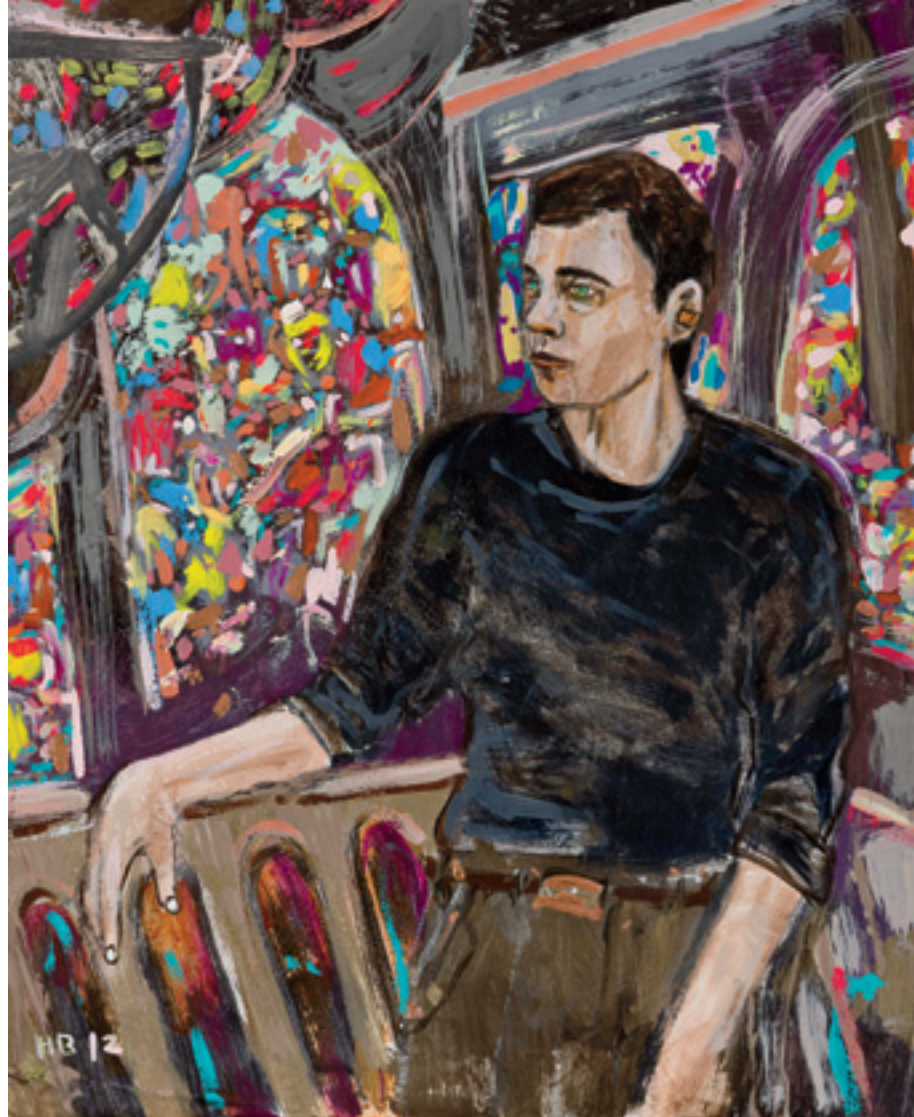
Also creating excitement is the Encounters sector—featuring large-scale sculptural and installation pieces—being curated by Japan's highly regarded Yuko Hasegawa of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. “Last year, Yuko's selection spurred a compelling discourse around contrasting generational and cultural 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.

These types of collaborations with local institutions help Art Basel recognize, support, and promote the exploding 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 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,

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which have opened Hong Kong outposts over the last few years. These dealers, along with influential homegrown stalwarts such as 10 Chancery Lane, Galerie OraOra, and Pearl Lam, are instrumental in developing and nurturing the careers of artists and collections in the region.

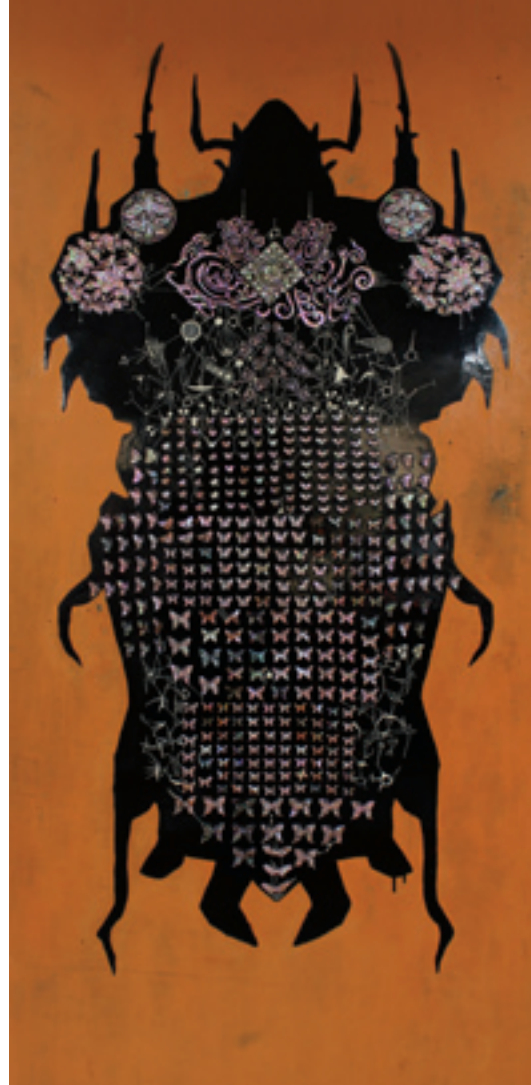
According to Renfrew, these relationships with the local galleries and institutions (including Asia Art Archive, Para/Site, the Asia Society, and Spring Workshop) are imperative to AB in HK as they create a show “grounded in the city.” “We want to promote long-term arts infrastructure development and 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 program. 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 the Tate Modern, London, 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, 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.” [artbasel.com/en/hong-kong](http://artbasel.com/en/hong-kong) **OD**

UnKyung Hur’s *Guardian of Insect*, from Korea’s Leeahn Gallery.



Last year’s AB in HK fair offered a range of thought-provoking art installations.

## LOCAL LENS

Miami collectors offer insight into the upcoming AB in HK.

**Dennis Scholl, Vice President/Arts, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami**

“What stood out to me when I met the art community for Art Basel in Hong Kong was their enthusiasm for their own artistic product. It spurred considerable attention and activity from the Western collecting world. There are collectors who are building Chinese-only collections, feeling that work is at a high level and still fairly valued.”

**Bonnie Clearwater, Director and Chief Curator, Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale/Nova Southeastern University**

“The studio complexes in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shanghai are making it possible for artists to be inspired by each other’s close proximity and provide a strong support system that connects them to collectors, curators, and dealers. There is a network of knowledgeable independent curators that are indispensable for outsiders to navigate the Chinese art world.”

**Craig Robins, President of Dacra and Contemporary Art Collector**

“Art Basel’s presence in Hong Kong is an important validation of the market. The influence is evident within the collections of some of [Miami’s] leading contemporary art collectors like Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz [and] the Fontainebleau, which displays an important piece from Ai Weiwei in one of its public spaces. Miami has such a strong tradition of [multiculturalism] that I think we will see growing interest in the years to come.”

**Dale Anderson, Palm Beach Art Collector**

“When I started going to China to collect contemporary Chinese photography more than 12 years ago, the art scene was boiling and these incredible artists exploded onto the scene. Since Art Basel launched in Hong Kong, the dialog between artists, dealers, and collectors [has] become more stimulating as more people are exposed to the work.”