

The Churchgoing Satanist (Earplugs) by Hernan Bas, 2012.

Eastern Time

ART BASEL'S SECOND ANNUAL HONG KONG SHOW BLENDS THE BEST OF ASIA AND THE WEST FOR VEGAS'S COLLECTORS. 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, 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

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—MAGNUS RENFREW



The late Chinese artist Chen Zhen's large-scale *Le Rite Suspendue/Mouille* (1991) was installed at last year's Art Basel Hong Kong.

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 awarded to one of nearly 30 participants of this sector 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.

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 **V**

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PACIFIC OVERTURES

The Vegas art crowd sizes up the market.

JERRY SCHEFCIK, UNLV DIRECTOR OF GALLERIES

“The joy of art is when it can draw from the roots that gave it life and continue to give it life however it is interpreted. An exciting aspect of current Asian art is when it draws upon those elements that made it truly unique and identifiable as from that culture. If Asian artists continue to reflect in some regard on their heritage, I think there can be a distinct contemporary Asian aesthetic.”

PATRICK DUFFY, AVID COLLECTOR AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE LAS VEGAS ART MUSEUM

“Art Basel has reached perfect centers to create great global saturation points and share ideologies through visual art. The art markets are better appreciated internationally when you have power art centers that give collectors an efficient means to travel globally. Artists are better positioned to meet collectors and create impressions that last and can be bankable.”

MICHELE QUINN, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF MCQ FINE ART ADVISORY

“Hong Kong and Asia, with all of the money there, is a no-brainer. It is interesting to see the gallery openings because now contemporary Asian art is such a solid segment of our marketplace. Ten years ago there were still a lot of questions like “Where is this going?” “Is this the next direction?” I think these questions have been answered when you see the galleries that have established themselves [in Asia] like Lehmann Maupin, White Cube, James Cohan, and so many other high-level, blue-chip galleries that have planted their feet firmly on the ground there.”



FROM LEFT: The fair will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, set against the city skyline and Victoria Harbour; fair director Magnus Renfrew.