

To Be Titled
by Dan Colen,
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asian allure

AS VEGAS POWER PLAYERS BUILD IN MACAU, THEY PREPARE TO DELVE INTO THE ASIAN ART SCENE AT THE NEARBY HONG KONG DEBUT OF THE ESTEEMED ART BASEL.

BY SUE HOSTETLER

“Hong Kong is the gateway to China,” says renowned local interior designer and architect Todd-Avery Lenahan, explaining why the cosmopolitan city has been anointed the newest host of Art Basel, the most esteemed art fair in the world. “The demographic of buyers is diverse and highly sophisticated, with tremendous interest in Western artists, as much from young collectors as from established ones.” Currently working on the new Wynn Cotai resort in Macau for Steve Wynn, Lenahan is one of many high-level art connoisseurs looking forward to the premiere of Art Basel in Hong Kong. Almost two years after the company behind Art Basel bought a majority stake in Asian Art Fairs Ltd., which founded the Art HK contemporary art fair, the newly rechristened Art Basel in Hong Kong will open May 23 to much international fanfare, boasting work from more than 3,000 artists and 245 of the world’s leading galleries. This expansion into Asia gives the storied fair an unparalleled three-continent, year-round engagement with the art world’s cognoscenti (Art Basel’s other shows are the Switzerland behemoth and its Miami Beach spin-off).

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



“Hong Kong buyers have a tremendous interest in Western artists.”

—TODD-AVERY LENAHAN



Magnus Renfrew, Art HK’s original fair director and now director Asia of Art Basel, has overseen the transformation. A longtime believer that Hong Kong is a natural home for a major international art fair, he is confident that both attendees and participants will be blown away. “We are geographically positioned at the heart of Asia, and we are the region’s financial center,” Renfrew says. “There is no tax on the import or export of art, and Hong Kong has an increasingly expanding cultural sector and culturally interested population.”

Art Basel’s shows are perhaps most renowned for each selection committee’s unflinching rigor in choosing galleries to participate, as well as for the curation of the fairs’ various sectors. In Hong Kong, more than 170 exhibitors of modern and contemporary art will show work in the main sector, including New York’s Dominique Lévy gallery and 303 Gallery. Many eyes will be on the Insights sector, which will present projects devised specifically for the fair from 47 galleries in Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. The Discoveries sector will likely be the most experimental, with solo and two-person exhibitions by emerging artists and, in an exciting twist, a \$25,000 prize.

Special exhibitions and events at local galleries will also be of immense interest, as the arrival of blue-chip international players like Gagosian Gallery and White Cube—joining local stalwarts such as Hanart TZ Gallery and Osage—has invigorated the Hong Kong gallery scene in recent years. The multitude of events and special exhibitions at Hong Kong’s cultural institutions and nonprofits is dizzying, including a parallel program of talks

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



“The market is in a relatively early stage of development in Hong Kong, much like the atmosphere in Miami 10 years ago.” —MAGNUS RENFREW

space for working artists, curators, and the public.

Not surprisingly, Art Basel in Hong Kong has proved attractive to corporate sponsors looking for a foothold in this fast-growing, significant region. Deutsche Bank has signed on as lead partner, joining associate sponsors such as Davidoff, Audemars Piguet, and Absolut Art Bureau, all of which also support the shows in Switzerland and Miami Beach. In fact, many people have compared today’s Hong Kong art market to the one in Miami Beach 10 years ago. “The market is in a relatively early stage of development here, much like the atmosphere in Miami when we opened there,” Renfrew says. “We want to be part of the cultural surge in this dynamic city, and the show provides the perfect global platform for that.” *artbasel.com* **V**

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presented by Asia Art Archive. Widely regarded as the most important collection of source material on the recent history of art in Asia, Asia Art Archive has grown from a single bookshelf in 2000 to a trove of more than 35,000 records with thousands of physical and digital items. And the government is getting in on the art act, too, by celebrating the opening of its new Artspace @ Oil Street, a 1908 heritage building that has been converted into

IF YOU GO...

Las Vegas Todd-Avery Lenahan lists his must-see stops for first-timers to the Hong Kong art scene.

“We are buying Asian art like you would not believe!” says designer and architect Todd-Avery Lenahan, who is working on the Wynn Cotai resort in Macau. “Everything that we source or have made for us is to honor the special culture and history of the region. We want to be patrons of Asian art.”

At the show: Lenahan suggests that attendees from Vegas first stop by the booths of the show’s two Los Angeles-based galleries, the venerable Blum & Poe and the cutting-edge 1301PE. Also exciting, he says, will be the 47 galleries from Asia and the Asia-Pacific region showing work in a new sector called Insights, dedicated to the contextual and thematic presentation of important Asian artists over the last 100 years.

Lenahan also recommends paying special attention to work in the Encounters sector, selected and organized by celebrated Japanese curator Yuko Hasegawa.

Local galleries: “I’m currently working with Gagosian Gallery in LA, which enthusiastically says that Hong Kong is as much a dynamic market for Western galleries to do business with as LA, London, and New York,” Lenahan says. He adds that a trip through at least a few of the dozens of new international galleries, several in the historic Pedder Building, should be at the top of every showgoer’s list. For homegrown art, be sure to check out the gallery Osage.

Local institutions: The Asia Society Hong Kong Center, located in a (huge) former British Army explosives compound, and the ambitious Para Site, a (tiny) hip nonprofit dedicated to contemporary art, will be popular destinations. Also don’t miss Hong Kong’s largest contemporary arts project to date, at the West Kowloon Cultural District, especially its numerous performing-arts facilities (and, opening in 2017, M+, its new museum of 20th- and 21st-century art). Finally, stop into Lenahan’s favorite Hong Kong haunt, designer Sir David Tang’s legendary China Club. The retro-chic Art Deco restaurant and club in the old Bank of China building is decorated top-to-bottom with blue-chip art.



Todd-Avery Lenahan, seen in his Las Vegas office, has plenty of tips for Art Basel in Hong Kong attendees.

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Concealed in Penetrating Lights by Kishio Suga, 2008.

