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Hong Kong Fondue



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Photo: Art Basel

Featuring works from some 248 galleries in 32 different countries, Art Basel Hong Kong is a worthy Asian counterpoint to the Swiss festival that has become one of the most important events for the art world. Director Adeline Ooi spoke about Indian art and curating the show that will be held from March 29 till 31.

Q. What is distinctive about Indian contemporary art?

If you look at some of the artworks, there is a distinct quality in terms of intricacy and attention to detail. The narrative is compelling and the content, Indian. The new artists in India are nuanced in their approach. Younger artists are transcending boundaries and looking at the question of identity.

Q. How is Art Basel Hong Kong different from the original Swiss show?

The show has matured over the years and galleries are getting bolder. The Asian audience is a fast learner. It is not easy to get into Art Basel Hong Kong fair. It is a great opportunity and a huge validation. We have a rigorous selection process. For instance, we have the baby gallery of Mumbai Tarq in the fair and that's our commitment to promoting art in the region with newer galleries.

Q. Did any particular Indian artist catch your eye?

We were surprised with Vishwa Shroff, who has had four solo exhibitions, 'Postulating premises' (2015) at Tarq Gallery, 'one eye! Two eyes! Three eyes!' (2012) At the Acme Project Space, London, 'Memories of a known place' (2012), Birmingham, UK, and 'Room: Collaborative book show' (2011), Vadodara. Her 'building artefacts' with Tarq explores architectural forms on paper, everything is clearly etched and it is all about the human touch. The show is wonderful; it is about rediscovery and new discoveries.

Q. Why do you think Asian art is so fascinating?

If we were all happy countries, you can't have good art. Our histories are not mimicking the western art practices and in order to understand Asian art, we must remember the context. It is a cauldron of identity, society, politics and history.

Q. Can you give us an example?

Pakistani artist Ali Kazmi will present an immersive installation inspired by his hometown Lahore, which is a political work and talks about the situation in Pakistan. All the countries in this region respond uniquely and collectively to the post-colonial past and there are works that are going to stand on their own.