

ARTS

What's Trending at Art Basel Hong Kong

By ANITA GATES MARCH 26, 2018

The art comes from London, Paris, Hong Kong and New York, of course — but also from Yogyakarta, Zug and Cluj. Visitors to this year's Art Basel Hong Kong can count on seeing almost any kind of contemporary art their hearts desire, from galleries representing 32 countries and territories.

There are definite signs of unpredictability. The Iranian artist Sam Samiee, who has chronicled the grisly history of crucifixion, is showing a playful multistyle painting collection (Dastan's Basement, Tehran). Dora Budor, the Brooklyn-based Croatian photographer, who recently sent costumed Leonardo DiCaprio look-alikes into an art-fair crowd, is showing photographs of elderly women (Antenna Space, Shanghai). For Li Jingxiong, boiled plastic foam is the new art medium (Hadrien de Montferrand, Beijing).

But certain themes and trends keep cropping up.

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Reflections

When Yoko Ono created "Mirror Image" for the 2017 Venice Biennale, she covered a room's walls with mirrors of various styles and sizes. Visitors were asked to share their thoughts. In a new installation, "Mirror Image (for Hong Kong)," shown by the Parisian gallery Lelong and Company, there's just one mirror (large and oval). The instructions read: "Look into the mirror and see yourself. Write down what you see." Paper and pen are provided.

Sophia Al-Maria, a Qatari-American performance artist, is presenting "Cookie Mirror," a video installation, via the London gallery Project Native Informant. The actress Bai Ling inspired by, among other things, the climactic mirror-maze scene in Orson Welles's "The Lady From Shanghai."

Galleria Continua of Beijing is showing the work of Anish Kapoor, the Indian-born London sculptor known best for steel and resin pieces like "Random Triangle Mirror" and "Sky Mirror." The trend must be strong in Germany, too. At least three Berlin galleries — Barbara Wien, Société and Neugerriemschneider — are presenting light sculptures and mirrorscapes.

Issues Down Under

Colin McCahon is the star of the Gow Langsford Gallery (Auckland, New Zealand) booth. Postwar abstract Australasian paintings by Mr. McCahon (1919-87) address life, death, spirituality and the land, but they also touch on Maori and settler politics. The artist grew up in a tiny New Zealand town, was influenced by the Abstract Expressionists and went on to enormous pieces on unstretched canvas. “The Urewera Triptych” (1975), his most important work, makes a special appearance here.

Even for Sydney galleries like Roslyn Oxley9, diversity is a central topic. In the Discoveries sector, the indigenous artist Nyapanyapa Yunupingu will be showing her “Gana (self),” a sculpture-installation that includes totemic bark paintings. In the Galleries sector, there are Anglo-Australians who focus on indigenous culture, like Tracey Moffatt, a Brisbane-born photographer and videographer.

While some New Zealanders call for a new isolationism, the Auckland gallery Michael Lett reflects on the country’s encounters with the effects of refugee crises, rising sea levels and other 21st-century phenomena. The Berlin-based, Auckland-born Zac Langdon-Pole offers an unusual interpretation of passports — nine small sculptures made of paper nautilus shells.

No Boundaries

Don’t tell the Chinese artist Tan Ping that a painting is supposed to stop where the canvas does. “It goes beyond the canvas and right onto the wall,” Carrie Shen of the Leo Gallery in Hong Kong explained. “The result of this process is different every time, from one location to another.” The technique is called overspreading, and the project that introduced it is called “The Certainty of Uncertainty.” When Tan Ping’s acrylics are hung in their new spot in Hong Kong, he will make a second creation there, influenced by the space, the environment and his mental state that day.

Don’t tell Ulla von Brandenburg, whose work celebrates the theater world, that audiences are supposed to stay in front of “7 Curtains.” “Le rideau a deux côtés,” the Paris-based artist told *Le Figaro* in 2014. “The curtain has two sides.” The idea in her installation is to step behind the curtains and find yourself in the wings, a performer by position if not by action.

Pilar Corrias of London is a co-presenter with Meyer Riegger, which is in Karlsruhe, Germany, the artist’s hometown.

And apparently no one told Chou Yu-Cheng that there should be limits to installation titles. The Edouard Malingue Gallery of Hong Kong is showing his “Refresh, Sacrifice, New Hygiene, Infection, Clean, Robot, Air, Housekeeping, www.ayibang.com, Cigarette, Dyson, Modern People.” One of the installation’s collections consists of gleaming white plates and bowls the size of bookcases and giant white chopsticks that could function as battering rams. The artist, who lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan, is also blurring boundaries between formalism and free verse, preparation and presentation, the poetic and the mundane.

A Changing Subcontinent

Some Indian galleries at the fair seem to lament changing times. Subodh Gupta misses the old days when delivery men known as dabbawallas used wheelbarrows to take home-cooked lunches in tiffin boxes to work sites (and most workers didn't order from restaurants online). His installation, "Start. Stop.," shown by the Arario Gallery of Seoul, South Korea, is a slowly moving sushi conveyor belt bearing pots and tiffin containers.

Vivek Vilasini misses clean air. Some studies have concluded that the toxic smog in New Delhi is the equivalent of smoking as many as 45 cigarettes a day. An Indian-born conceptual artist, Mr. Vilasini responded with "City — Fifth Investigation," leaving 31 thin sheets of Tibetan rice paper in a roof garden atop a three-story building downtown, removing one per day and using a fixative to preserve the buildup. Mr. Vilasini, shown by the Sakshi Gallery of Mumbai, is the same artist who painted "Last Supper Gaza" (2009).

Others are looking at future, present and past. Visitors will see an android-like Rorschach blot and a robot pointer hand in the project from Galleryske of Bangalore. The Mumbai gallery TARQ is presenting the urban-architecture-influenced work of Vishwa Shroff, including pieces from her "Partywall" series (gold leaf and ink on paper). And Jhaveri Contemporary is showing the Pakistani artist Ali Kazim's landscapes, near Lahore, a city founded well before A.D. 1000.

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