

Preview: Art Basel Hong Kong 2016

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Art Basel in Hong Kong 2015, General Impression (© Art Basel)

The fourth edition of Art Basel Hong Kong this March, according to Art Basel's Director Asia Adeline Ooi, is being envisioned as a deeper and broader reflection of artistic production in Asia. "I'm particularly pleased that this year's fair is going to showcase a greater depth and range of Asian art. I think that audiences will be able to see more layers in terms of content from Asia," she says.

"Our Insights sector is a prime example, with many solo exhibitions of individual artists, and specially curated thematic material. The main Galleries sector will feature more solo booths, and galleries will be showing artists that are not usually presented in a fair — in a sense, it will be more historical," Ooi points out.

Despite Art Basel's reputation for "what's popular among the blue chip names," the Hong Kong show is also "for other people who don't know our art histories here in Asia, so that they can understand where we come from," emphasizes Ooi.

"I think it's great that important movements like Mono-ha, Gutai, and Dansaekhwa are represented, but the greater depth this year is important as well," she adds. In the Encounters section, curated by Alexie Glass-Kantor, executive director of Artspace in Sydney, for instance, Ooi hopes to "stretch the timeline represented" with posthumous selections, as well as more historical figures like Keiji Uematsu and Roberto Chabet.

Despite the rapid development of contemporary art infrastructure in Asia over the past few years, Ooi doesn't shy away from the fact that the region is still regarded with something akin to polite condescension by more established art world insiders from the West. "In a sense, I think it's inevitable that Asia is always going to be underestimated," says Ooi, who suggests that this attitude is sometimes merely the result of ignorance of Asian art histories.

"There are some who don't know much about us, and assume that we're still the 'wild west.' So I'm pleased that Art Basel Hong Kong 2016 will have a greater range than previous editions," she adds, singling out artists such as Tadasu Takamine (formerly of the Japanese new media collective Dumb Type), who has never been presented within the context

of an art fair, at Arataniurano; Kimiyo Mishima's ceramic sculptures at MEM; Martin Wong at PPOW Gallery; and Ni Haifeng at In Situ - fabienne leclerc. "If we don't have that, I think that sort of learning and discovery about Asian art will never be achieved."

The lineup for 2016 retains its commitment to showcasing Asia: around half of the 239 participating galleries hail from the Asia-Pacific region, with 28 galleries coming to Hong Kong for the first time, including Asian dealers Antenna Space, galerie nichido, Gallery 100, Ink Studio, Longmen Art Projects, MEM, Vanguard Gallery, and Yeo Workshop.

Insights, featuring the more historical material and curated thematic presentations that Ooi hopes will help to raise awareness of underappreciated Asian artists, will include Michael Cook's (Australia) narratives of colonial histories at This Is No Fantasy + dianne tanzer gallery (Melbourne); sculptures by Guan Xiao (China) and Yu Honglei (China) inspired by themes of 'postproduction' and 'reproduction' at Antenna Space (Shanghai), performative video works by Tadasu Takamine (Japan) at Arataniurano (Tokyo) that highlight the societal effects of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, presented by Arataniurano (Tokyo), and new sculptures by Tayeba Begum Lipi (Bangladesh) at Pi Artworks (Istanbul, London) that reflect on her childhood.

The large-scale Encounters sector will feature 16 artworks by artists including Brook Andrew, Hans Berg and Nathalie Djurberg, Roberto Chabet, Chen Zhen, Isa Genzken, Kyungah Ham, Richard Maloy, Tintin Wulia, Tromarama, and Keiji Uematsu. Second-time Encounters curator Alexie Glass-Kantor has conceived the sector as a series of site-specific works that "have been created as a direct response to exploring what an 'encounter' is or could become," encouraging the audience to interact with and immerse themselves in the ambitious installations.

Meanwhile, curator Li Zhenhua also returns to curate the Film sector. Presented in collaboration with the Hong Kong Arts Center, the 2016 Film sector will for the first time be expanded to include feature-length and documentary films, with screenings taking place at the main venue, the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center, for the first time.

And one of the most highly visible presentations will again unfold over the entire façade of the 490-meter-high International Commerce Center (ICC) on the Kowloon harbor front for the duration of the fair. Newly commissioned from veteran Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima, "Time Waterfall" is made up of a falling cascade of natural numbers one through nine, with each digit in a different size, that never reach zero — a poetic expression of the endless flow of life that never extinguishes itself. Visitors keen to get the best views of Miyajima's monumental projection should hightail it to Tamar Park, Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park, or the outdoor terraces of the IFC Mall that faces ICC on the Hong Kong side of the harbor.