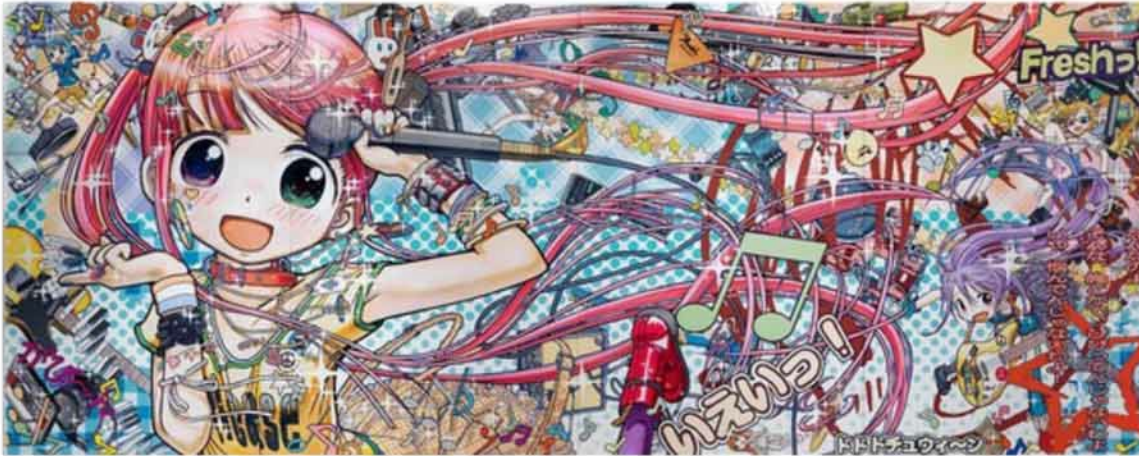


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A New Art Basel for Asia

Culture vultures and collectors alike alight in Hong Kong for a rebranded show; 'this is a lifestyle for certain people'

By JASON CHOW



Mr., Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. and Lehmann Maupin

Lehmann Maupin is showing 'True To Myself, Poyo Mix, Append' by the Japanese artist MR.

Just as the jet set leave one art fair in New York, they descend on Hong Kong for the next.

Art Basel in Hong Kong, the latest in what has become an international circuit, kicks off on Thursday. The fair comes at a busy time for art lovers, just two weeks after Frieze New York and a week before the Venice Biennale. Art Basel, in Switzerland, takes place later in June.



Zhen Chen and de Sarthe Gallery

de Sarthe Gallery will exhibit Zhen Chen's 'Le Rite Suspendue/Mouille' installation.

"It's a marathon—really intense," said Richard Chang, a collector who splits his time between Beijing and New York and plans to attend all four events over two months.

Despite the crowded calendar, the international art world is making room for the Hong Kong fair, which represents Art Basel's first foray into Asia. The region has never been more important: China is now the

world's second-largest art market after the U.S., according to an annual survey conducted by the European Fine Art Fair, and Southeast Asia's wealthy have grown into voracious collectors of regional art, pushing the value of Asian works ever higher.

A newcomer in name, Art Basel takes up the mantle from the Hong Kong International Art Fair, often called Art HK, which became the continent's biggest art event since its 2007 launch.



Damien Hirst and White Cube Gallery

Damien Hirst's 'Ptolomeo, 2012' appears at White Cube's Art Basel booth.

Eyeing its growth, MCH Group, Art Basel's owner, bought a majority stake in 2011, and is this year rebranding it in line with the fairs it has held in Basel since 1970 and Miami Beach since 2002.

Art Basel draws some of the world's wealthiest collectors and bon vivants—Kanye West, Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton were among the attendees of December's Miami fair—and organizers hope that the same will be true of its Asian edition.

"Before, the spotlight was already on Asia and Hong Kong," said Art Basel Asia director Magnus Renfrew, formerly director of Art HK. "With Basel's resources, that spotlight is so much brighter."

With 245 galleries, including 48 who have never shown in Asia, the Hong Kong event rivals Miami in size but remains smaller than the Swiss fair, which hosts 300-plus exhibitors. It already looks set to trump both fairs in terms of attendance: Last year's Art HK counted more than 67,000 visitors, a figure that exceeds Art Basel numbers and which organizers expect to match this year.

The new fair will maintain Art HK's focus on Asia: More than half of the galleries attending will be from the region, Mr. Renfrew said.

But the most deep-pocketed attendees are likely to notice one change: Art HK had just one person dedicated to VIP clients, which typically include major collectors, museum curators and gallery owners. By contrast, Art Basel has 25.



Angela Bulloch/Simon Lee Gallery

'Short, Big, Yellow Drawing Machine' by Angela Bulloch

Among the institutions confirmed to attend are the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Dallas Museum of Art, while the guest list for a gala at the Asia Society on Monday includes the dealer Larry Gagosian, Blackstone Group Vice Chairman J. Tomilson Hill and philanthropist Fayeeza Naqvi.

Meanwhile, the fair has attracted Western galleries looking to tap into the growing ranks of Asian collectors, including Budi Tek, a Chinese-Indonesian tycoon who is building a private museum in Shanghai, and Qiao Zhibing, a Shanghai-based nightclub owner who decorates his establishments with works by

Damien Hirst and Antony Gormley.

"The goal is to explore new markets," said Marina Schiptjenko, director of Andréhn-Schiptjenko in Stockholm, which is exhibiting in Hong Kong for the first time. She added that the Art Basel name "guarantees quality" and was a major factor in convincing her to commit more than \$90,000 to cover booth fees, transportation of the art, and travel expenses.

Artists are also making their first trip to the city. Brothers Jake and Dinos Chapman will attend their own exhibition at White Cube's Hong Kong branch, where dioramas mixing Nazi soldiers and Ronald McDonald will be on display, and Berlin-based British artist Angela Bulloch will hold a solo show a few blocks away at Simon Lee Gallery.



Liu Xiaodong and Eslite Gallery

'Chaotic Mess 1' by Liu Xiaodong

"As artists, we're hearing more about Hong Kong," said Ms. Bulloch, whose "Short, Big, Yellow Drawing Machine" scribbles yellow ink on the wall in response to sound and will appear the fair. "When they asked me, I leapt at the chance."

Basel organizers don't track sales among exhibitors, but big spenders have come to Hong Kong in the past. At last year's Art HK, gallery owner Pascal de Sarthe sold "No. 313," a nearly 9-foot-tall oil painting by Chu Teh-Chun, for more than \$3 million during the early hours of the fair.

As White Cube's Asia director Graham Steele noted, however, Art Basel isn't just about the art. "It's parties, food, companionship," he said. "This is a lifestyle for certain people."

Hong Kong may have an edge on Switzerland on the cuisine front. "A lot of Asians come to Hong Kong because of the food," Mr. Steele added. "They're not so excited about restaurants in Basel."



Edouard Malingue Gallery

'Taboo Game' by Cui Xinming;